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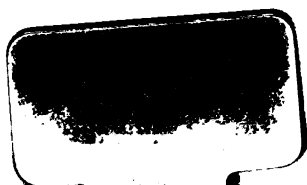
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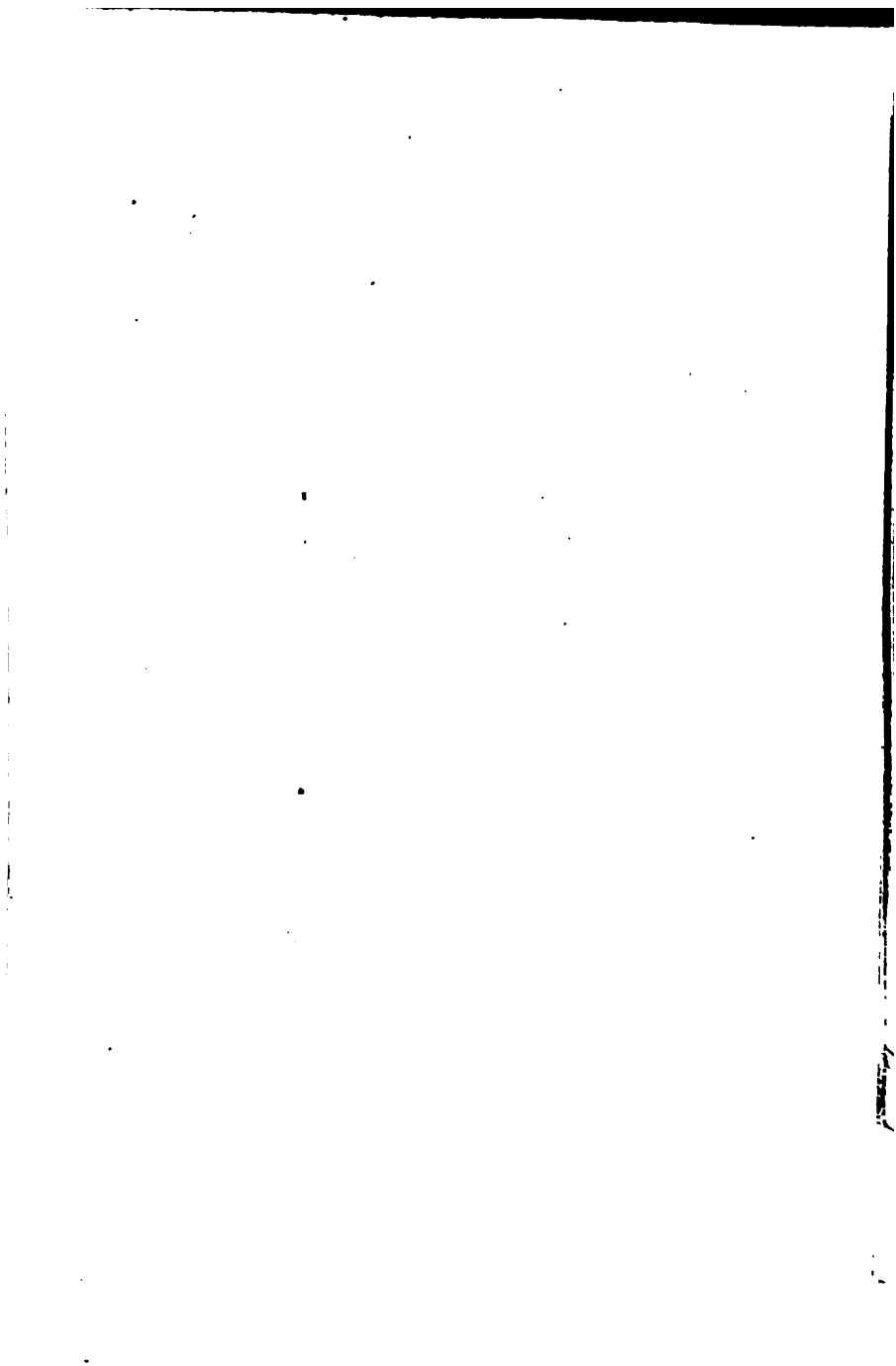




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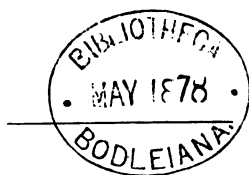
IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

REV. RICHARD BULKELEY,

Vicar of S. John's, Dukinfield.

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THROUGH THE BREAKERS.

CHAPTER I.

"YES, he was a lovely boy, the heir of Bearcroft." At least so all the old folks said, and of course they knew. "An A'Bear every inch of him," thought the old steward that very day, as he saw him ride by on his dark bay pony, "Silvertail," a present from his grandfather a month or two before.

"Quite one of Nature's gentlemen, though he has the best blood in the county," remarked the wife of a neighbouring yeoman, who had been housekeeper in one of the best families in her younger days, and therefore was an

authority in such matters, and whose heart the young squire had quite won by presenting her youngest daughter on one occasion with a rosebud from his own garden.

Tall for his age, but not too slight, strong, and compactly built, inheriting a constitution which had not been weakened by the excesses of his ancestors, as active as the deer which were now lying in herds beneath the patriarchal oaks in the adjoining park ; with dark brown hair and eyes, broad forehead, and the A'Bear nose, he looked indeed a lovely boy, and an A'Bear every inch of him, as was evident from his resemblance to the portraits in the old hall. His mouth and chin, which he inherited from his mother, though well formed, were perhaps the weak points in what was otherwise a fine face ; yet they gave a softness to the countenance which seemed wanting in the family portraits that adorned the ancient hall.

It was one of those hot, sultry summer days in June which we sometimes have a brief

spell of, without a cloud to hide the azure brightness of the sky, without a breath of air to move the lazy leaves of the grand old oaks which were dotted about the park, and filed off in a double avenue on either side of Bearcroft, the ancestral abode of the A'Bears. All nature seemed asleep. The large herd of deer on one side of the house were collected under the wide-spreading boughs of some giant trees that looked as if they had once belonged to a primeval forest, and only gave signs of life by an occasional movement when beset by a more active swarm of flies than usual. On the other side of the house the hay was lying in heavy swaths upon the new mown turf, for the mowers had followed the example of the deer, and had betaken themselves to the shelter of the trees, where most of them were fast asleep. The only creature that seemed really awake was the peacock that strutted majestically on the broad gravel walk, except little Reginald A'Bear, who, clad in the somewhat old-

fashioned garments of the earlier part of the second quarter of the century, occasionally appeared on the scene, accompanied by his inseparable companion "Don," until called in again to play in the old hall by his ever watchful attendant, Nanny Woolcote.

Bearcroft was a fine old manorial residence, one of the finest indeed in England, with a hall that dated from the time of the Plantagenets, and a tower even older; the rest of the building having been rebuilt in the days of Queen Elizabeth by Reginald A'Bear with the proceeds of a successful raid against the Spaniards in the South Seas. It was a noble pile of buildings, built at the foot of the Mendip hills, in Somersetshire, a fit habitation for a family who had held possession of the soil from the Norman conquest.

But on the day in question, little Reginald A'Bear (there had always been a Reginald in the family since the re-building of the house), played with less zest than usual; not so much on account of the heat, as because a

sort of gloom had appeared to reign in the house for some time. Children very often see with a sort of prescient instinct ; and though nothing had been said to, or before him, and everything was going on much the same as usual, yet the child without reasoning or thinking much about the matter, perceived that something had taken place ; and so, without exactly knowing the reason why, after a few attempts he felt he could not play, and going into the house again sat down on a settee in the old hall to pore over a quarto edition of the " Pilgrim's Progress," which he had discovered in the library, and in which he was quickly engrossed. He read it with delight, for though unable to penetrate its deeper meanings, he yet enjoyed, as most children do, the wonderful pictures which Bunyan's almost inspired pen so vividly and constantly presents to the understanding. After a time, however, his mind began to wander into the realms of fancy, and to wonder if the old knights in armour, whose pictures adorned

the walls, ever had such terrible battles or passed through such strange adventures as the good warrior Christian. The old hall in which he sat was panelled to the ceiling, and had originally been twice the height, it was hung with armour, amongst which was the battle axe and sword of the builder, Hugh, aye, and the very sword which he had received from one of the chief nobles of France after the battle of Cressy. One of the earliest portraits was that of Reginald A'Bear, who had supported Henry, Duke of Richmond, on Bosworth Field, while on the opposite wall was one of his grandson of the same name, the builder of the house in its present form, who had commanded a ship at the defeat of the Armada, and others who with the cry of "A'Bear! A'Bear!" had struck many a good blow for king and country. There was the portrait of one who had fought at Nasby, and of his son, a friend of good John Evelyn, who interceded not in vain for the lives of some of his neighbours after Monmouth's defeat at

Sedgemoor, near Bridgwater; and who, if report spake true, bribed Jefferies when at Taunton to be more merciful than was his wont. Mingled with these were courtly dames; a Gainsborough; a vermillion lipped Peter Lely; and others of an earlier date, that looked as if they intended to represent Egyptian mummies rather than flesh and blood, and which seemed to stare at one another, as they had done for many a generation, with a look of helpless vacancy.

Reginald, or Reggie, as he was called, had sat for about an hour on the settee when a door in the panelling on the opposite side of the hall was opened, and a gentleman appeared. There could be no doubt as to his relationship to the boy, as little Reggie was a very miniature of his father, except that the delicately formed mouth of the son was replaced in the father by one that marked the utmost firmness and resolution—on the morning in question its sternness was stern indeed. He called to his son, who came running to him, and

contrary to his usual custom, as he was not very demonstrative, he took him up in his arms and fondly and passionately kissed him again and again, then putting him down said as he led him into the library—

“Your grandpapa wants to speak to you.”

The old man who was nearing the allotted age of man, though he did not look so by some years, was sitting in an arm chair in the window, from whence there was a lovely home view of the park and woods, with the Mendip hills as a background.

After a fond caress, which the little fellow returned as affectionately, he took him on his knee, and gazing for a moment wistfully through the open window on the beautiful view before him, turned to his grandson and said—

“Reggie, are you very fond of ‘Silver-tail?’”

“Yes, grandpapa, and everybody says that there never was such a pony.”

“Well, my boy, do you think you could

part with him, if your papa and I wished it ? ”

The possibility of parting with “Silver-tail,” of whom the little fellow was very fond, he could hardly realize, and he hung his head, but after a moment raised it again, and looking his grandfather full in the face, said, although the tears were standing in his eyes—

“Yes, grandpapa, if you wish it; but I should like to ride him once again.”

“And so you shall, my child—but do you think you could not only say good-bye to ‘Silvertail,’ but to all your pets, and leave Bearcroft, and your garden, and the old hall ? ”

The child evidently misunderstood his grandfather, for he at once answered, “Oh, yes, grandpapa, are we going to see Uncle Ralph, at Bath ? ”

At the sound of his son’s name the father winced, and what sounded very much like a muttered curse came from his brother’s lips.

“No, my child,” replied the old man, after

a moment's pause, "try and understand me. I mean to leave Bearcroft for good; to say good-bye to it, and never to come back again any more."

"Oh no, grandpapa, I don't think I could say good-bye to Bearcroft for good. I don't want to go; besides I should never see you and granny any more." And the little boy nestled closer to him.

"We should all go together, my child. Try and understand me. Of course you would not like to go away; but suppose you could not stay without acting a dishonourable part; suppose if you were to stay, many people who had loved and trusted you would be ruined; would have no food to eat or clothes to wear,—how would my little Reggie act then?"

The whole affair was clearly beyond his philosophy; one thing was quite certain, that he did not want to leave Bearcroft, so after a moment's pause he cut the knot by saying—

"I should like to do what you are going to do, grandpapa."

"Your papa and I think that we ought to leave Bearcroft."

"Then, grandpapa, I should like to go to," answered the child, thoughtfully, for from having been made the companion of people so much older than himself, without many opportunities of seeing children of his own age, he was thoughtful beyond his years.

As there was no object in prolonging the interview, the little boy was sent out again to play. But instead of playing he walked up the grand avenue, and crossing the road, entered the churchyard, and making his way to a beautiful white marble cross, the most conspicuous object in it, sat down at its base. Upon it was written, "Margaret A'Bear, the beloved wife of Reginald A'Bear," and the date—but little more than a year before. His heart was very full, and therefore he had come, for ever since his mother's death it had been his custom when full of childhood's troubles to come there and think over them, and talk to her about them—as she seemed

nearer to him there than in any other place—as though she might comfort him as she used, and somehow he generally obtained solace.

This notion, strange in such a young child, had been put into his head by his nurse's mother, old Susan Woolcote, who had told him that his mother knew what he did, and watched over him as when she was alive. The clergyman of the parish finding him there on one occasion, had questioned him, and, discovering the object of his coming, advised his father to prevent his visits for the future ; but the father had not the heart to do so, besides which he thought that they were far more likely to do the boy good than harm. Feeling sure that it was all owing to old Susan's Swedenborgian proclivities, the worthy man had paid a visit to the lodge with but little effect, for the old woman was ready with chapter and verse in support of her heresy, if heresy it be, and more than astonished him with her ideas of the New Jerusalem, and

novel expositions of some well known passages of Scripture.

Reginald sat for a while on the stone coping around the cross, but did not seem to-day to derive so much comfort as usual from his visit, for he could not realize the fact that he had to leave Bearcroft and everything he loved there, and above all his mother's grave in the old churchyard. The little boy in short felt very miserable. At this moment the black retriever "Don," who had missed him, jumped the wall, and made his way to his young master, who threw his arms round his dumb friend's neck and burst into a flood of tears, saying—

"Donnie, Donnie, you couldn't be left behind, you would be sure to come," while the faithful creature, according to the principles of canine charity, testified his sympathy by licking his face and hands. In a little while, however, he recovered, and, with the buoyancy of childhood, by the time the gong sounded for dinner had almost forgotten

his troubles in a game with "Don" in the avenue.

After he had left the library, the father and son sat for some minutes in silence, which at last was broken by the elder of the two—

"It seems hard to leave the old place, after it has belonged to us for nearly eight hundred years—but anything is better than dishonour. I have enjoyed it for nearly seventy years, so could not have looked forward to many more. I am not thinking of myself and your mother, but of you and Reginald. Yet, it must be done. The name of A'Bear must never be associated with dishonour."

"Yes, father, it must be done, and the sooner the better. It is of no use to prolong our agony, and with your permission I will go to London to-morrow, and make the necessary arrangements."

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph!" cried the old man, "why did I ever listen to you? why have you thus dishonoured me, bringing down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? It is not

for myself that I care, but for you and Reggie that I grieve, that you should lose your inheritance through my misjudgment."

"Grieve not for us, father, you acted for what you thought was the best. I wish I had been at home at the time, and then perhaps it would not have happened, but do not grieve. I have a strong constitution and iron will, as you know, and though it is somewhat late to begin, yet I rather look forward for many reasons to have to fight the battle of life without the aids of property and position. As for Ralph, the less said the better; he had no intention, I believe, of acting dishonestly, but it is his over weening vanity and self-conceit which has proved our ruin and his own."

But what could have brought in one day this family to the brink of ruin, when there was not one penny of debt on the estates? Simply this. A bank had been started at Bristol. Col. A'Bear, of Bearcroft, had taken £20,000 of shares, thinking it would be a

suitable provision for his younger son, Ralph, who was appointed one of the directors. All went well for a time, indeed for some years; the name of A'Bear was a tower of strength to them in the neighbouring counties; it was thought to be a safe and flourishing concern, and many, especially among the staunch yeomen of Somerset, became depositors, Colonel A'Bear being at the time one of their representatives in Parliament.

At the time of the formation of the bank Hugh was abroad, for he had entered the army and joined a regiment going to India—from pique, it was supposed, at being jilted by a lady who had shown her bad taste by preferring fascinating manners and outside polish to sterling worth and blameless honour. Very shortly after the opening of the bank he had suddenly sold his commission and returned home, his return having been caused, so report said, by a foolish paragraph in a paper which spoke of his brother Ralph's eldest son as the future heir to the estates;

and before twelve months were over had married a sister of a brother officer whom he had met at Bath the previous winter. Though he had never really loved her, he had had the truest esteem and regard for her, which was gradually ripening into affection, when she died the year before this story commences. He had felt her loss very deeply, but his was not a nature to sorrow over much, or at any rate to show that he did ; and feeling that the best remedy in his case was action, the only apparent effect of her death had been to make him begin several important and much needed improvements on the estates, and to attend all the more zealously to his Parliamentary duties, for his father had retired, and he had been elected for the county without opposition shortly after his return from India.

But he little thought what was so soon to happen, for he had hardly commenced the improvements when, owing to some heavy failures in the Bristol leather trade, ugly rumours began to be noised abroad as to the

stability of the bank, soon followed by its closing. During the investigation which followed it was found that many of the original promoters had been men of straw, and had started it in order to prop up their own ruined fortunes. It was before the days of limited liability, and the A'Bear estates were liable for the whole debt. The claim, however, could have been resisted, as they were strictly entailed, and Ralph advised it, but to this neither his father nor elder brother would listen for a moment, and they determined to cut off the entail, and pay all the creditors in full, with interest up to the day of the closing of the bank. Poverty could be endured, but not dishonour. The old colonel, however, from a sort of chivalrous sense of honour, feeling that his grandson would be the greatest sufferer from the transaction, determined to speak to him on the subject before the matter was finally settled. Hence his conversation with him ; and it was with a

heavy heart and tearful eye that he saw his son depart on the following morning to make arrangements for the sale of the estates.

We are too apt to talk about education as though it only commenced when a child enters the schoolroom, as though the learning of the alphabet were the first round of the ladder. On the contrary, the education of a child should, or rather does, commence while it is still within the cradle; and everything that meets its eye—for through the eye it receives its first impressions—should be directed to that end; the very furniture of the room, the very pictures on the walls; let alone things of greater importance—the characters, dispositions, conversation, and example of its parents, nurses, and others with whom it is daily and hourly brought into contact.

Is it too much to say that its training for good and evil commences when the first smile lights up its infant features, that earliest glimmer of the dawn of intelligence and

affection, that proof so dear to the mother's heart that the child is beginning to notice what is taking place around, and that its heart is echoing back her love.

"Sands make the mountains, moments make the year," and so, also, it is many influences, some apparently trivial, others almost unheeded at the time, and others again of such magnitude as almost to alter the whole tenor of a life, which go to make up that composite structure which we call the character of a man.

Up to this time, the gentle teaching of his mother and grandmother, and the as judicious training and careful example of his father and grandfather, had laid the foundation of little Reginald A'Bear's education and character, no mean stone of which, however, had been laid by his nurse and her mother, old Susan Woolcote, both women of deep religious principles and convictions, though somewhat superstitious. But now events were about to follow one another in quick succession, which

would ever after bear their impress on his life and character.

He never forgot that conversation with his grandfather, seated on his lap in the old library of Bearcroft.

CHAPTER II.

“THE A’Bear estates to be sold—the A’Bear estates to be sold—well, I should as soon have expected to have seen an announcement of the end of the world”—exclaimed the possessor of many broad acres, a baronet and M.P. of the neighbouring county, after reading at his club the preliminary announcement in the “Times” of that morning; the word “A’Bear” having caught his eye as he took up the paper.

The very idea fairly took his breath away; so having readjusted his spectacles, he read the notice over again to make himself quite certain of the fact; and it is not too much to say that it formed almost his sole topic of

conversation, not only for that day, but for many months afterwards.

The announcement was as follows :—

“Preliminary advertisement.—Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire.—The A’Bear estates, comprising a distinguished family mansion, of noble proportions and great antiquity, known as Bearcroft, with out-offices, lawns, gardens, pleasure grounds, and deer park, occupying a central position in the domain of 2,000 acres of the richest land in the county, divided into arable, meadow, pasture and woodland, with farm-houses and homesteads in the occupation of respectable tenants. The mansion, situated in the centre of the deer park, commands extensive views over a charming landscape. Included in the above are other estates in Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire, altogether comprising nearly 8,000 acres, with a rent roll of about £12,000 a year. Messrs. Bland, Parkes and Co., have

received instructions to prepare the above-mentioned valuable estates for sale by auction. Further and more detailed particulars will be given in succeeding advertisements."

Wars and rumours of wars! The debates in the House of the previous night were forgotten for the nonce, and going downstairs he called a cab, bought a "Times" newspaper, and hurried home to Bryanston Square, where he much startled his wife by rushing into the morning room in a most excited state with the latest intelligence.

They discussed the probable causes of such an unlooked for circumstance, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion, and after lunch went their different ways in order to try and learn something more certain about the matter; the worthy baronet feeling very much as though he had heard of a revolution having broken out that morning, and muttering to himself—"England is going to the dogs!"

—"End of the world!"—and many ejaculations of a similar character.

Much about the same hour there was seated in his counting house, in the town of Manchester, an elderly man, by name Matthew Adams.

A little old man, how old it was impossible to say, for his skin was like that of a mummy, indeed, he had rather the appearance of one, except for the piercing glance of his keen grey eyes, that looked as though they had never been engaged in anything but business transactions, as though they had always been occupied in taking the measure of things or people. His mouth seemed as though it never could have smiled.

"When yet he was a boy, and should have breathed
The open air and sunshine of the fields
To give his blood its natural spring and play,
He in a dusky counting house, smoke-dried
And seared and withered up his soul. So from
The way in which he was trained up his soul
Departed not."

For he had never been known for thirty years to have taken a whole day's holiday,

not even when he was married, Sundays excepted, which he scrupulously observed.

His father had died about forty years before, leaving him and his twin brother a growing business and £10,000 between them.

For some ten years they went on in the same plodding way, and then one day over their single luxury, a glass of whisky and a pipe the last thing in the evening, came to a very strange determination, and there and then drew lots as to which of them should marry, having previously agreed that whoever should be the unsuccessful one was for ever to remain single, and assist in building up a name and estate. The lot had fallen to Matthew, the old merchant in the counting house, who, before the month was over, had married Rachel Michelson, a distant relation of his mother, who had kept house for them for some years, for this also had been part of the agreement. His method of proposal was peculiarly suggestive of the man ; courtship there was none. As he was making up his

diary one evening—it was always the last piece of business of the day—he called her in, and having written “Proposed to Rachel Michelson, and was”—handed the pen to her. She thought a moment, and then having filled in the hiatus with the word “accepted,” immediately left the room. Before the end of the month they were married; and as they were both getting on in years, the hopes of father and uncle had to be centred on one son, who was christened Matthew Henry Adams, after the contracting parties.

Matthew was now the sole survivor; indeed, he had outlived his son, who, much against his will, had married the daughter of the clergyman of the parish, a lovely and amiable girl; “a giglet of a thing,” as the old man called her, but very wrongly, as she had plenty of energy and determination that only wanted the opportunity to develop itself. She had only one child, about six months old, which, much to the old gentleman’s disappointment, was a daughter, to whose training

and education she determined entirely to devote herself.

Otherwise the intentions of the brothers had prospered. Each pound of the original ten thousand had now almost grown into a hundred. He also was reading the "Times," for the previous week or two he had taken to read the last page first. He slowly passed his eye down its columns until it rested on the advertisement of the sale of the A'Bear estates. This he also read carefully a second time; but it caused him no perturbation, he evidently did not consider it a proof that England was going to the dogs; for after a short mental calculation, he cut out the advertisement, wrote a letter to his solicitors, Messrs. Gruggen and Bailey, and calling a clerk, told him to send it. It was to order them to take the necessary steps to purchase the property. Having so done, he spent the half hour that he allowed himself for reading the news, in the perusal of the paper, and then passed the rest of the day in the usual routine

of his business, as though he had done no more than order a pound of tea or coffee. Messrs. Gruggen and Bailey knew the man they had to deal with, and, after acknowledging the receipt of the letter, acted upon the order contained in it without any further interview or interchange of letters with him.

And what took place at Bearcroft during the time that elapsed before the day of auction? Some men praised the honour and self-sacrifice that prompted the deed, and honestly hoped that they would have been able to have acted in the same way had they been placed in similar circumstances. Others praised the deed, for it was the fashion to do so (the "Times" of the day had a leading article on it written in the usual lofty style of such articles), but inwardly doubted as to what would have been their conduct in such a case. In some circles it was talked of as a piece of absurd Quixotism. The county rebelled against it. The tenants were troubled and aghast—the bucolic mind, though honest, could not com-

prehend it—that any one but an A’Bear should be their landlord seemed very much like the beginning of the end. But all the while the inhabitants of Bearcroft went on in the usual tenor of their way. The establishment was reduced to the smallest possible dimensions; the horses and carriages were sold, including “Silvertail.” Hugh A’Bear spent most of his time in Bristol or London, and cheered himself with the thought that the settling up of such an affair as he was engaged in was no mean preparation for any business into which he might afterwards enter.

Before the year was over his future career was settled, a career which was at once lucrative and honourable; for the Government of the day, though opposed to him in politics, in token of their appreciation of his noble conduct, had offered him the governorship of one of the Indian Presidencies, as he had always in his speeches shown considerable knowledge of Indian affairs. This he thankfully accepted.

There was a property of some three hundred acres belonging to his mother in the South Hams of Devonshire, for so that district is called which, peninsula-like, with its four bold headlands, Start Point, Prawle Point, Bolt Head and Bolt Tail, stretches out into the sea between Plymouth and the Dart. Being out of the usual line of tourists it is but little visited, although containing some of the grandest and most beautiful coast scenery in Devonshire. Thither the old people determined to retire with their little grandchild, while his father went out to India to try and build up again a fresh fortune. And then came the great trial, the saying farewell to Bearcroft and all its tender associations. It was dreaded by all, but the last few days passed away all too quickly in visiting old haunts, in saying farewell to old friends and tenants and humble dependants; and many were the earnest prayers offered up by their poorer neighbours as with tearful eyes they

watched them sitting for the last time in the chancel of the old church, which was filled with ancient monuments of the family; for they had ever been kind friends to the poor, and friends in need to all whom they could assist.

At last the morning broke—a clear, bright, autumnal morning, and Bearcroft, with its woods beginning to show the October tints, looked its very best. The last walk was taken through the garden and shrubberies; and by husband and son the farewell visit was paid to the white marble cross in the old churchyard. The last breakfast was eaten, and then the carriage drew up which was to bear them away from their happy home, so soon to be the property of a stranger. The hearts of all were much too full to speak, even Don seemed to understand what was taking place. Many of the tenants had come up to say farewell to their good old squire, and stood with their hats off around the

carriage, but none spoke; it seemed as though they had too much respect needlessly to increase what must necessarily be the sorrow of its occupants. The old steward as he lifted little Reginald, whom he loved as one of his own grandchildren, into the carriage, said, as he kissed him tenderly and laid his hand upon his head, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." But the words and actions of the steward had unlocked the lips of those who were around, and it was amid the "Amens," and deep blessings of the poor, that the worthy descendants of a worthy ancestry bade farewell to their home.

A pause was made at the corner of the road from whence there was a view of the house, and all stood up and looked once more towards Bearcroft, and continued watching until it was hid by an angle of the wood, and then the

old lady, who had borne up bravely all the morning, broke down and cried bitterly as one that refused to be comforted. Her husband lifted his little grandson into her lap, who put his arms round her neck, and said—

“Grannie, don’t cry, you’ve got me.”

“Let me weep, A’Bear,” she said (she always called her husband A’Bear, when in a serious mood), “think not that I am regretting or wishing to stay—it is nature’s remedy—I shall be better afterwards.”

She was a woman naturally of strong and passionate feelings, but age and religion had softened them, and before long she had apparently recovered, and began giving Reginald a description of their future home, where she had spent much of her childhood. Before evening they had arrived at Bath, where a house had been taken for the winter, as some necessary alterations had to be made in Burrscombe before it could be fitted to receive them.

The events of the day seemed to the little

boy at the time almost like an ugly dream, but, nevertheless, they formed an epoch in his life that could never be forgotten, and he fell asleep thinking of the old steward's blessings and the villagers' amens.

CHAPTER III.

It was a strange and motley gathering that were met together a few days afterwards in the auction mart of Messrs. Bland and Parkes.

The Gloucestershire baronet was there looking unutterable things, and very anxious to know who was to be his neighbour; the regular hangers on at sales were there, who were always ready to buy a property if it went cheap, but somehow or other never bought one; speculators were there who were ready to buy on the same terms, and who sometimes bought. Besides these, however, and a sprinkling of noble lords and owners of large estates, anxious to know "who was going to become one of us?" and the mem-

bers of the British public whom curiosity had attracted, there were *bonâ-fide* buyers, city merchants, returned colonists, rich East Indians, wealthy stock brokers, Staffordshire ironmasters, Manchester cotton spinners; for it was seldom that such a property came into the market, as the auctioneer said—“Not a sixpence, gentlemen, I assure you, need be expended on the estate.”

And who could do justice to the auctioneer? In a usual way Mr. Septimus Bland sat at home at ease while Mr. Elihu Parker did most of the work; but such an auction as this could only be taken by the senior partner. His name exactly expressed his character, at least as far as auctioneering was concerned, for report said that at home his manners to his wife and children were not of the most amiable character, but as an auctioneer he was blandness itself. Impatience or anger had no effect upon him, and whatever might be his conduct at home, in his public capacity he always put in practice the Scripture pre-

cept of not returning railing for railing; as he would often say to his partner—

“It’s of no use to quarrel with your bread and butter, if moral suasion won’t do the business, nothing will.”

On the morning in question he ascended the rostrum with an air of importance, and after reading the conditions of sale, proceeded to make, as he said, a few remarks on the nature of the property before them. It was interesting, especially to Mr. Elihu Parker, to see how he tantalized his audience, for when he had apparently exhausted auctioneering adjectives and substantives in describing the grandeur of the distinguished and venerable mansion, the beauty of its site, the salubrity of its climate, the extent of the domains, the fertility of the soil, the undeveloped resources of the estates, and his listeners anxious to begin, and yet nervous about beginning, thought he must have come to an end, he went through it all again but with a fresh vocabulary.

Everything, even the long drawn out eloquence of a Mr. Septimus Bland, must have an end, and "£100,000" was the first bid for the estate by a gentleman who had evidently the cut of a military man, and indeed was a colonel in the army, who had lately come into a large sum of money left him by an uncle. All eyes were at once turned upon him.

"£200,000" was immediately echoed from the further side of the room; and all eyes were as immediately fixed upon the representative of a well-known barrister of long standing, who was making, so report said, £25,000 a year. "And 50," answered the head of an old established firm of publishers.

So the ball rolled on; but it was evident before long that the contest lay between the colonel and a Merthyr Tydvil ironmaster.

"£350,000," said the colonel; "and 10," answered the ironmaster.

Now, £350,000 was the sum which the colonel had that morning determined to give for the estate. But, here came in the genius

of the auctioneer, for blandly smiling he said—

“£360,000 only offered for this estate; going dirt cheap; never have such another chance, sir; a gentleman of your profession will surely not give in? Another ten, sir, let me say another ten, sir—just one more ten, sir?”

A nod was the answer to his eloquence, and what ever it may be to a blind horse, a nod is as good as a wink to an auctioneer; and he smiled with an air of triumph to his junior partner.

“£370,000, only”—but he was cut short by “and 10” uttered in very determined tones by the gentleman from Wales.

“Come, sir, one more ten?” But he had disappeared.

Now, was Mr Septimus Bland in despair—£400,000 was the sum it was hoped the estate would realize, but there was no further bid. So after expatiating once more on the extraordinary cheapness of the bargain, he

raised his hammer and was about to knock it down to the representative of the iron trade, when an apparent member of the British Public, who had been watching the sale with interest, but, who up to the present time had taken no part in the proceedings, raised his head, and, with a twinkle of his grey eye, said "90."

Here was a new element added to the excitement, and while the mixed multitude jostled one another in order to get a look at him, and the auctioneer rubbed his hands in ecstasy, the ironmaster took his measure, which he did not at all like, as he was a canny Scot, about six feet high, the senior clerk of the firm of Gruggen and Bailey.

However, he bid £400,000, which was the highest sum, as he had told his wife that morning, he intended to offer, and he was a man of his word.

"£410,000," said the Scotchman, slowly and deliberately. A shake of the head was the Welshman's only answer, and, after a

little further palaver, the estate was knocked down to the highest bidder.

“And who may be the purchaser?” asked Mr. Septimus Bland, in his blandest tones.

“Messrs. Gruggen and Bailey, on behalf of Mr. Matthew Adams, of Manchester,” was the answer.

Now, had the Gloucestershire baronet been accustomed to draw deductions from a given data in his youth, he might have learnt, from the scene he had witnessed, to have changed his mind with reference to the state of England. Instead of which he ejaculated—

“And who on earth is Mr. Matthew Adams?”

“Ye’ll ken weel eneu in gude time, I reckon,” was the answer of the long clerk.

Thus it was that Mr. Matthew Adams became the possessor of the A’Bear estates, and his little grandchild Lucy, a baby of six months old, the heiress of Bearcroft.

“Wasn’t the governor grand yesterday?” was the remark of the young hopeful of the

Bland family to the junior clerk, as sitting at the same desk in the office, on the following morning, he gave him an account of the previous day's sale.

At much about the same hour, on the day following the sale, the news reached the seller and the purchaser.

By Colonel A'Bear it was received with feelings of the greatest thankfulness, for the purchase money would enable him to pay off the creditors of the bank in full, and yet leave what, to many persons, would have seemed a comfortable fortune.

By old Matthew Adams it was received in his dingy counting house ; and, strange to say, he at once (such an event had never been remembered by the oldest clerk) closed his books, locked his desk, and started on a visit to his daughter-in-law, who was very much astonished to see him.

She met him, however, with much warmth, as the repugnance which she had at first felt towards him had been gradually changing.

into affection, for since his son's death, and the birth of little Lucy, his manner had greatly softened, and he had been kindness itself to her. None ever knew, but the old man himself, how deeply he had felt his son's death, what a veil it had lifted from before his eyes.

She was holding the little one in her arms when he entered the room. He asked for the child, carried it to the window, and, after examining it attentively, she heard him mutter—

“Little Lucy, the heiress of Bearcroft—and for this I spent my life—ah! Henry, it was a foolish bargain.”

The old man had been brought up as a Quaker in his youth, and during the last few months it had been observed that he had often, especially to his daughter-in-law, adopted, apparently without observing it, the phraseology of his childhood; and, when he had given the child back to her mother, he said—

“Lucy has more of thy look, and of her

grandmother Rachel, than of Matthew Adams, and, perhaps, it is as well. Dost thee know, Kate, that thine infant will have great possessions?"

"Yes, father, and I often do not know whether to be sorry or glad."

"Thine uncle Henry and I once made a foolish bargain; and all depends now on the life of little Lucy here. Thou wilt watch over her, and tend her carefully? But I need not ask thee. I judged thee wrongly once, but I have marked thee since, and thou art wise beyond thy years. I have bought a great estate for her this day, and thou wilt be her sole guardian when I am gone, and thou wilt watch over her, and if she live"—and the old man paused.

"O father," his daughter-in-law exclaimed, "don't talk about going away, you are still well and strong—much stronger than many men who are younger, and God may spare your life for many years."

"True, my daughter, but we cannot hinder

the sun from setting ; I am an old man, and my strength is fast failing me. I cannot long be with thee. Thou art wiser than I am in many things, and thou must help thine old father to reach another world and a better." As he rose to go, he said—"Fare thee well, and may God bless thee and the child," and she rose up also and gave him her child to kiss, and kissed him herself for the first time.

When old Matthew Adams, the hard-headed and successful merchant, left the house he had feelings in his heart which he had never experienced before, and he could not analyse them.

The little dingy counting house saw him for the last time the day before Christmas, when he called his clerks and those workmen who had been with him any length of time into his office, one by one, and made them each a handsome present, according to their length of service. He had then made arrangements for retiring from the firm in favour of

his junior partners, two young men, whom, on account of their steady habits and aptitude for business, he had taken into partnership a few years previously ; still, however, keeping a certain share in the business, in case, as he said, any of Lucy's descendants should like to enter into commerce.

Most of them received it with merely a word of thanks, without any further comment, wondering what could have so suddenly changed their master's nature.

The last to come was Jemmie Campbell, the porter, not many years younger than his master, whom he in many points resembled. Having been a faithful servant of the family in one capacity or another since his boyhood, he had instinctively acquired many of the same habits and peculiarities.

When he took the cheque he read the sum over several times—a sum more than sufficient to keep him in comfort for many years ; and, as he put the piece of paper carefully in his pocket, looked at his master for a moment,

and then said—more, however, to himself than to him—

“Puir Matthew Adams, I dinna ken what’s come till ye, just a puir daft bodie in yer old age.”

“Nay, nay, Jemmie, I know well enough what I am about, you have been a faithful servant to me for many years, and it is only right that you should enjoy a portion of my gains. I think it is time for both of us to retire from business, and try to get ready for the long journey, in time, Jemmie—in time.”

The old man sat for a few minutes absorbed in thought, and then rose quietly and took down an old ledger in which was the last entry made by his brother Henry—looked at the familiar hand—closed the book again—placed it tenderly in its place—gazed slowly round once more—carefully shut the door as usual—locked it—gave the key to the porter—passed out into the street—and when the porter touched his hat he saw that there were tears

in his master's eye; and Jemmie Campbell, as he closed the gate and walked home, said many times with a shake of the head—"Puir Matthew Adams—puir Matthew Adams!"

CHAPTER IV.

MARCH, which had come in like a lion, was going out like a lamb when the good ship "Cadmus" started from the East India docks, *en route* for Bombay; a fine vessel, well found in every respect, and this was only her second voyage. Among the passengers was Hugh A'Bear, and as the vessel was to touch at Plymouth on the way out, he had with him his little boy, Reginald, for the child had pleaded so earnestly at the last moment to be taken, that he could not refuse him the request. He had said farewell to his father and mother, who had been settled at Burrscombe for about a month, and it had been arranged that John Woolcote, the nurse's brother, who with his sister, now in the capacity of cook, had

accompanied them to their new home, was to come to Plymouth to meet him.

As long as they were in the river Reggie enjoyed the many novel sights that met his gaze; but long before they reached the North Foreland had wished himself on shore many a time, and under the care of one of the sailors, an immensely powerful negro, was lying on the deck in no very enviable plight, wrapped in his father's rug. Next day he was better, and his father pointed out to him the various points of interest as they occasionally neared the shore, and spoke as only a father would who was about to leave his only son for a long time.

On the following day the wind was contrary and not so settled; and it was towards evening that Start Point, the most southerly point in Devonshire, was sighted; and the sun had set before it was rounded, too near under the circumstances to be wise. The captain was below attending to his young wife, whom he was going to leave at Plymouth—they had

not been married much more than a week—and the ship was in charge of the pilot, whose duties had really ceased at the Isle of Wight, but who, out of friendship for the captain, had remained on board. The ship was new and sound, it had an excellent crew and efficient captain; and, though the wind was rising and gradually veering to the southward, there was nothing to cause the least alarm—but, unfortunately, the captain was below looking after his wife, and the pilot relieved from a sense of responsibility had been drinking.

Now, round these headlands the currents are very strong and are constantly altering, and many a good ship and valuable cargo have been lost, by not allowing for them. More especially were they dangerous on this occasion, as the wind and tide were rising, and the darkness which was rapidly coming on hid the danger from eyes, upon which the safety of the vessel depended, unfortunately not so keen as usual.

At last an old salt came up to the pilot and

said, "Master, it seems to me we are getting too near shore to be pleasant. I seem to hear the breakers somewhat plainly and the cry of the gulls, too." And as he spake, the wind died away from the canvas, which began to flap about in an ominous manner. The pilot read the signs at once, and immediately altered the helm and gave orders for the men to wear the ship.

Directly afterwards the captain came on deck, having noticed a change in the vessel's movements, and at once exclaimed to the pilot, "Good God, we are within the light! How did you get the vessel into this position?" And then, without waiting for an answer, reiterated the pilot's orders. But the ship missed stays, she did not answer her helm, and began to drift towards the shore. He directly sent men aloft to loosen more sail, in hope that thus she might catch the wind; but, almost immediately afterwards, seeing that it was hopeless, ordered the sheet-anchor and then the best bower to be cast off—

they dragged for a time, and then brought the vessel up.

. "Thank God, there is hope for the 'Cadmus' yet, if we can only hang on until the morning," said the captain, who now tried to redeem his neglect by everything that skill and ingenuity could dictate. "Cut the masts away," was his next order; and soon they were over the side, and for a time the vessel seemed to strain less heavily on the cable, but only for a time, as the wind and tide were rising. All control, too, except in a few cases, was soon lost over the crew, most of whom had never been together before this voyage, and a rush was made for the boats. One was lowered, but so many crowded into her that she was rendered unmanageable and quickly swamped. The other, however, was got off under the charge of the pilot, and was picked up a few hours afterwards by a passing vessel and carried into Plymouth.

So sudden had been the catastrophe, that until the sound of the paying out of the cable

reached their ears, none of the passengers—many of them happily were waiting the arrival of the ship at Plymouth—had the least suspicion of danger; but by the time the course of the vessel had been stopped, they were all on deck, many of them with but little clothing on; amongst them Hugh A'Bear with little Reginald in his arms. There was no need of asking any questions—the danger was too evident.

What must have been the feelings of Hugh A'Bear, as, standing by the fragment of the mizen-mast, with his child in his arms, he watched the scene of desolation around him. Reader, pity that strong man, who had endured the loss of his patrimony almost without a murmur, brought thus face to face in a moment with an inevitable fate; and if hard thoughts, as he saw all his plans for the future, the hopeful anticipations of months, thus dashed to the ground, entered his mind, let us trust that when recorded they were forgiven. His

feelings were, however, not so much for himself; many a time before, in India, he had been face to face with death; but his thoughts were with his father and mother, now sleeping quietly only a few miles away, little thinking of the danger he was in; and his heart was wrung for his child, as he thought of the light of his young life so soon to be quenched. Still he strove to conquer them, and, in comforting his son, tried to persuade himself of the probability of their being rescued. Years afterwards, when Reginald was a boy at school, he came across the phrase, "*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose,*" and he at once recognized the words as having been used by his father on this occasion, and in after life the thought gave him much pleasure.

Had a rocket been near at hand, or a life-boat on the coast, doubtless many valuable lives might have been saved; but unfortunately the position of the vessel

was some way from Salcombe or Hope, the nearest preventive stations, and it would have been difficult to have brought the necessary apparatus over such a rugged country on so dark a night. Some coast-guards on the cliff had perceived at an early period the great peril of the vessel, and the guns which she now began to fire at intervals had attracted the sparse inhabitants of the district, and lights began to appear on the cliff above, and afterwards at a point on the shore a little to the north of where the "Cadmus" was lying. And for what cause had they come—with the humane purpose of saving life? No! The most of them had hasted thither with the hope of plunder, for a wreck in these parts is still looked upon more or less as common property, and the jetsam and flotsam to belong to the finder in the natural course of things; and strange stories are still current on the coast of ships having been enticed upon the shore by false lights; of

persons having been found with hands mutilated for the sake of the rings on them, and of lives destroyed that might have been saved, and of men shunned even by their rough neighbours on account of such deeds—but these things had taken place some years before.

It was a grand sight to those on the beach of the little cove, and on the cliff above, as they watched the "Cadmus," and discussed her probable fate, willing but powerless to render any assistance to those on board; for the moon had risen, and occasional rays of light from behind the dark clouds had revealed the exact position of the vessel. Had the anchors been fixed in good holding ground the chances would have been in her favour, but it was very evident that they were dragging in the shaly bottom.

"She is many yards nearer the Lantern than she was half-an-hour ago," said old Nix Jarvis, who had been a noted smuggler in his day, to his son of the same name.

"Yes," he answered, "and she'll be to pieces before morning—"

"A full cargo, I should think," he added after a moment's pause, "as she's pretty low in the water;" and they hastened down to the Water Cove, at the end of the Dragon bay in which the vessel was lying, for they knew every inch of the way, having carried in former days many a lot of tubs along the narrow pathway.

Before they reached it, however, the beginning of the end had come, for a quiver passed through the unfortunate "Cadmus," and a shriek came from the remnant of the crew and passengers, as her keel grated on the rocks.

At this moment the negro, who from the beginning had been exerting himself to the utmost, came to Hugh A'Bear, and said—

"Massa, de ship must go, you had better give little massa to me, me a great swimmer, me try and save him."

But the father refused, saying they would

die together. However, as the negro persisted in his offer, Hugh A'Bear, looking at his herculean frame, and knowing that he was powerless himself to save him, conquered his natural feelings, and at the man's request gave the child into his arms, with an earnest prayer to God that he might be saved to be a comfort to his father and mother in their old age. Very shortly afterwards the vessel drifted on to the inhospitable shore, and as wave after wave dashed over her, began rapidly to break up, and while the valuable cargo sank amid the rocks or floated out of the hold towards the shore, the crew were one by one washed off to meet a watery grave.

It was a scene which Turner, who often studied sea views on this very coast, had he witnessed it would have immortalized on canvas. Some of the coast guards and others had managed to collect material for a fire which was now blazing away, and cast a lurid gleam across the bay; above, a huge cloud, like a mighty eagle with outstretched

wings hasting to the prey, hovered over the now doomed ship, while, as if to add to the delusion, the crescent moon tipped the seeming wings with silvery brightness, and gave a spectral appearance to the various objects around; below, the Dragon bay, so called from a vessel of that name lost there in the previous century, looked like a seething caldron, bubbling over with white foam, as wave after wave following one another in quick succession dashed on the beach, the spray of which, like a snow storm, was carried many hundred yards inland over Bolberry Down, and the bleak and rugged Sewers; on the rocks at the edge of the caldron, lay the ill-fated "Cadmus," or rather the remnants of what had been but a few hours before a noble vessel, and still clinging to the fragments of her deck was a group of persons, the negro and little Reginald, his father, the mate, and three sailors. The captain and his wife had been among the first to perish, for the wife had been washed

overboard, and her husband in trying to save her had been dragged down by the current.

Every wave broke away another portion of the wreck, and their time had evidently to be reckoned by moments, when the negro, after a short consultation with Hugh A'Bear, stripped himself to the skin, leaving nothing but his waistcoat, bound the little boy to his back, waited his opportunity, and as a larger wave than usual rolled by, sprung to its crest, and was rapidly carried to the shore. With one arm round his head to save himself from being stunned by the floating fragments of the wreck and cargo, he swam, notwithstanding his burden, with powerful strokes through the breakers towards the light in the cove which had already been reached by two of the sailors and a passenger; while the father forgot his own danger, as with eager eyes he watched his son as long as he was in sight. Shortly afterwards the

cheers that came from the shore told him that they were safe, and his anticipated death was robbed of half its sting.

When a few yards from the shore they had been seen, and a chain had been made of human hands and arms over the *débris* of the wreck and cargo, which, raft-like, stretched from the shore of the cove into the sea, and they had thus been rescued.

The tide was now beginning to go back, and, as the morning dawned, the mate and sailors were rescued from their perilous position, a rope having been taken to them by one of a celebrated breed of Newfoundland dogs kept in the neighbourhood. But Hugh A'Bear was not with them. The mate said that shortly after the rescue of his son he had been swept overboard, and though for a time he appeared to be making progress toward the shore, he had been struck by a fragment of the wreck, and, after a brief struggle, had sunk. Thus perished a noble

and unfortunate man; to the end it seemed as though his fate had been to suffer for the faults and negligence of others.

Among those who assisted at the rescue of the negro and his precious burden was a farmer from the Sewers, who immediately took the little boy in his arms, and, having sent on his son ahead, hastened up the ascent to his home, followed by the negro, who had put on some clothes from a bale of goods that had drifted in from the wreck, and seemed but little the worse for his adventure. Reginald lay for a little time like one dead, but revived by a drop of brandy opened his eyes, and then immediately closed them again. At first they had but little hopes of bringing him round, but after his wet things had been taken off, and a few spoonfull of hot brandy and water had been forced down his throat, and he had been rubbed dry amid the tears and caresses of the farmer's wife and servant, he gradually began to revive.

If the scene upon the shore was one that Turner would have depicted, the scene about one hour afterwards in the kitchen of the old farm house was one that Mulready or Millais would have loved to have transferred to canvas. On a mattress in front of the fire lay the little boy, wrapped in warm blankets, in a deep sleep, with his head resting on the lap of the brave and stalwart negro, who refused to leave him ; while surrounding them was a group of the children of the house, gazing from one to the other with a half-awed, half-curious air.

And when the day dawned the storm had died away, and the sun shone bright, and the wind gently soughed around the craggy heights, and the birds sung, and nature smiled, and the treacherous waves were calm and quiet ; and, as it was low tide, they rippled gently on the beach, or chased one another as if in play between the rugged rocks ; and, like men with hatred in their

hearts, and words of peace on their lips, they sang as it were a soft and holy elegy over those whom but a few hours previously they had engulfed with merciless and relentless fury.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW hours later Colonel and Mrs. A'Bear were having breakfast in the parlour at Burrscombe—a low, long, old-fashioned room, with a carved oak beam running along the centre of the ceiling, which projected nearly a foot into the room—or rather breakfast was preparing, while the Colonel, pretending to read the previous day's "Times," which had just arrived, was in reality watching his wife, who was visibly trembling with suppressed agitation; so much so, that she had to make several attempts before she could pour out the coffee.

At last he put down the paper, and said, with much affection and anxiety in his tone—

“Winnifrede, what ails you this morning? You do not seem yourself; what has happened to so unnerve you? You have kept up so bravely all along; no, my love, you must not break down now; you must not begin so late in the day to act contrary to your favourite motto—‘Onward in faith, and leave the rest to Heaven.’”

“Yes, A’Bear, I know it is very foolish, but the effort to bear up and restrain my feelings has somewhat unnerved me, and I had a dreadful dream last night, which has frightened me. I know it is foolish to dwell upon it; but, oh, John, I would that I had my child safe in my arms. I fear that danger may have befallen him by the way,” and she began again to tremble violently.

Her husband went over to her, and after a time succeeded in quieting her, when she told him the dream. “You remember when Hugh was a child, we heard his screams when he fell into the pond at the bottom of the garden at Bearcroft, and how he was taken out

apparently lifeless, and his beautiful curly hair was covered with the green weed—but God restored him to us then. Well, last night, I dreamt it all over again, and he seemed to change from a boy into a man, and was lying on a bank of sea weed, and some of it was twined about his head, and the pond was changed into the ocean; and then I fancied I heard him crying out for help, and I awoke, and between the blasts of the wind I heard what sounded like the guns at sea of some vessel in distress—and then I heard a noise like a flock of birds flying to the window, and he seemed to come to me, and give me a kiss, but it was cold, so cold—and I wanted to cry out, but could not speak, my tongue seemed frozen with terror to the roof of my mouth. Oh, John, I dread some evil tidings; I know it is foolish, but I cannot help it, it is a mother's heart."

The old man tried to re-assure her, saying that the events of the last few weeks had excited her, and she needed rest, that Reggie

would be home in a few hours, and as for the guns it was only the sound of the waves rushing through Thurlestone Rock.

After breakfast he left her comfortably seated in the window with the Bible before her, as had been her custom for many years. Since his mother's death, however, Reggie had usually read the chapter to her, and very proud he was of the office of private chaplain, as his grandfather had named him. Her heart grew stronger and more calm under the influence of its words of consolation, as she read, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." But the heart of her husband was ill at ease, for though he had concealed it from her, the news of a shipwreck on the coast had already been brought to the house by the woman who performed the office of postman; and the neighbouring village, though some miles from the scene of the disaster, had been denuded of its inhabitants at an early hour, who had flocked thither in their hope of plunder. He longed for the

arrival of John Woolcote from Plymouth, and yet feared the worst.

The sight of Nanny quietly doing her work in the kitchen, and who asked him when he expected "young maister Reggie," somewhat re-assured him; but the hour was rapidly drawing nearer when the blow would fall, and the sad truth would be known.

Early in the day John Woolcote had known the worst; for having gone down to the docks to inquire if the "Cadmus" had come in during the night, he was told that she had been wrecked upon the coast, and that a boat with some of the survivors had been picked up and brought into Plymouth early in the morning. Although not a very wise man, and at the time almost overcome with grief at the disastrous and unexpected intelligence, he felt that the only thing to be done was to hasten back as quickly as he could, and consult with his sister as to the best way of breaking the sad news, hoping to get in the backway unperceived; but it was at a slow

pace and with a heavy heart that he entered the village, where he left his horse. But as it happened, Colonel A'Bear, unable to endure the suspense any longer, had started for the village to make inquiries concerning the wreck, and they met about a hundred yards from the lodge gate, and his master, seeing him without the child, knew that something must have happened. For a moment everything seemed to swim around him, and he grasped a gate for support, and waited for the coming of his servant.

Poor John, when he had first seen his master in the distance, looked from side to side, hoping to discover some way to avoid the dreaded meeting, but the high Devonshire hedges prevented it, and when he perceived that he was recognised, and saw his master stagger to the gate, he hastened forward. He was no diplomatist, and yet said what perhaps was the best, spoken as it was from a sympathizing heart.

“O maister, maister, doant-ee take on zo,

perhaps they be aloiv, vor the pilot zaid, di zee ye know, as how they was near t'zhore, and maister Hugh were allers a voine swimmer. Doant-ee take on zo, maister."

"Oh, John, I fear the worst, Hugh would never desert his child. Your mistress had a dream, too, last night. I have no hope. 'O, my God, Thy hand is heavy upon me, give me strength to bear it. Why have Thy judgments gone out against me? Thou has taken away my house and lands, and now Thou hast bereaved me of my children—If I am bereaved, I am bereaved'"—and he staggered again, and would have fallen, had not his faithful servant caught him in his arms, while the perspiration stood upon his forehead in thick drops.

"Doant-ee maister, doant give up hope—think of the missus. If it weren't for the dream"—he added to himself; for John was intensely superstitious, and the mention of a dream seemed to have frozen all hope within his heart.

"Yes, John, you are right, we must not give

up hope ; and your mistress—how am I to break the news to her ? I fear it will be her death. And the father roused himself, and with the help of his servant returned towards the house. He seemed to have grown ten years older in the last hour, and his walk, which was very vigorous for his age, seemed to have turned into that of a decrepit old man, under the pressure of the calamity.

But their arrival had been anticipated by a few minutes—the news of the loss of the “Cadmus” had already preceded them. One of those busybodies about other men’s matters which you find in every village, however small, knowing that the “Cadmus” was the vessel in which Hugh A’Bear had sailed, had come up to Burrscombe with the evil tidings ; and he found his wife struggling in the arms of Nanny and the other domestic, while she, good, faithful creature, after the first burst of sorrow, seemed to have forgotten her own loss in the intensity of her mistress’s grief, and was trying to sooth her with much about the

same words as her brother had tried to comfort his master.

Not a sound was coming from her lips, not a tear from her eyes. She would lie still for a moment, and then a paroxysm would seize her, and she would gasp for breath, and seem to struggle from the faithful arms which held her; and while her eyes would stare as though they saw some frightful object, her hands seemed mechanically to seek to clutch at her disordered hair. The sight of her husband brought on a fresh attack; but the strength of the passion of her grief exhausted itself all the sooner, and in a short time she was lying with her head upon her husband's breast, exclaiming mid her tears, with a bitter wail as of a Rachael weeping for her children who would not be comforted—"My children—my children—both gone—both gone."

He did not try to comfort her, for he needed consolation himself, but let her weep on and mingled his tears with hers.

"My children, my children," she cried again,

“my brave, my noble-hearted Hugh, my good son—my beautiful Reggie, the delight of my eyes, taken from me at a stroke, my darling boy—my children, my children, both gone, both gone—O my God, that thou wouldst have taken me in their stead—my children, my children, I shall never clasp you in these arms again.” And she opened her arms as though to take them to her heart, but she enfolded nothing but the empty air; and cried again with an exceeding bitter wail. But by this time another person had been added to the scene. Mr. Maitland, the clergyman of Sandstone, the parish in which Burrscombe was situated, and, who, although they had been such a short time acquainted, was already looked upon as an old friend, had visited the scene of the wreck at an early hour, and directly he found that the vessel was the “Cadmus,” and that little Reginald was among the number of the few survivors, he had returned as fast as he could, and hastened up to Burrscombe. He rung the bell several

times, but as no notice was taken of it walked into the house.

Seeing the state of affairs, that the worst was already known, he went up to the afflicted group, and taking the sorrowing mother by the hand, gradually and cautiously broke to her the unexpected news of the safety of the child. When she heard that there was a rumour that a child had been saved, and afterwards learnt that the child was her own dear Reggie, she rose from her seat, as though with a sudden gift of renovated strength, saying, "Take me to him, let my old eyes see him;" but she had misjudged her strength, and fell back into the arms of her husband, who calmed her, saying they would start as soon as the carriage could be got in readiness. Mr. Maitland offered the use of his which was waiting at the gate; his offer was thankfully accepted, and in a few minutes they were on their way to the old farm house on the Sewers.

The joy of Colonel A'Bear and his wife at

the recovery of their grandchild, which seemed to them almost as a resurrection from the dead, had for the time swallowed up every other feeling. The fact that one had been taken was almost forgotten in the knowledge that the other had been left. They loved their son Hugh very dearly, but, as is often the case with grandparents, their affection seemed in some degree to have passed over the next generation, and settled with renewed power and intensity upon their grandchildren and, Reggie, having been always with them from his infancy, was the best loved, the child of their old age, and he returned their love with equal warmth, and was never so happy as when in their company. Even if Mr. Maitland had not been with them there would have been no need to have asked the way, for the road, more especially after they reached Malborough, was dotted with vehicles and groups of pedestrians, a few returning, but the greater number going; some attracted by mere curiosity, but by far the larger part in

the hope of plunder, in which very few were disappointed.

Every event, however long it may seem at the time, must have an end, and at last the drive, which had been something over an hour, was finished, and they drove through the farm gates.

They were met at the entrance of the kitchen by the medical man of the district who had just come from seeing the child, and impressed upon them the necessity of keeping him in perfect quietness, saying that he did not apprehend any danger, for although there were some feverish symptoms they would pass away, and that sleep was at present the best remedy. Indeed they found the little fellow fast asleep, and cuddled up in the bed of one of the farmer's children, with his head on the pillow, and his beautiful curly hair, which one of the children had carefully combed out, streaming like skeins of glossy silk over the snow-white sheets. They did not disturb him, but after watching for a few moments in silence, their

hearts were too full to speak, Mr. Maitland knelt down and in a few simple words gave expression to their feelings of thankfulness for his merciful deliverance from danger. The grandmother having decided to keep watch by Reggie's side until he awoke, her husband and Mr. Maitland determined to walk down to the scene of the disaster under the guidance of the negro. Their progress in the narrow lane was constantly impeded by a reproduction of the groups which they had passed on their way to the farm house, but which were now much more numerous. The first pair they met were a man and his wife, the man with a long stick, which he had cut out of the hedge, over his shoulders, and the woman with a large basket—vultures hastening to the prey. Many, too, were now returning with the plunder, not by the direct road, but across the fields, with heavy bundles on their backs, like wolves sneaking home after they had glutted themselves with the carcass of their victim.

The immediate neighbourhood of the wreck was like a fair, the cliff lined with hundreds of people, the more adventurous of whom clambered down by devious paths to the shore; while the cove itself was surrounded by the coastguard, who, if report spoke true, not only on this occasion connived at much that was going on, but were themselves the worst of the thieves. Among the wreckage was a number of pilot coats—these they put on; filled their pockets with other spoil; and then, having sauntered up the cliff, divested themselves of their stolen raiment—which was taken possession of by their wives—and, as soon as it was convenient, carried on again the same performance. Very few garments were bought in the neighbourhood for many a long day, persons dressed in silk who before times had been accustomed to cotton—velvet cloaks became the fashion; children in the schools were remarkably well booted and shod during the following year; rushlights went out, and wax candles came

in for a time, and children were washed on Saturday nights with scented soap instead of common yellow.

The scene at the cove was one which could never be forgotten. Barrels of ale, bales of cloth, calico, and carpets, blankets, silks; casks filled with buttons, tapes, and cottons, were mixed with umbrellas, parasols, boxes of gloves, fragments of looking glasses and champagne bottles, cheeses, with here and there a tattered Bible, a battered-in tank that had once been full of malt, the carcass of a sheep, or unhappy chicken. Indeed the appearance of the cove, covered with fragments of the wreck, and of packing cases smashed into chips fit only to make lucifer matches, was just as though the contents of a small town had been turned out in a confused heap upon the beach.

After viewing the scene of desolation for some time, Colonel A'Bear addressed himself to the Captain of the Coastguard, who happened to arrive at that moment, and

mentioned his errand. He at once offered to help him to the utmost of his power, and, after a few inquiries from his men, had to bring the sad intelligence that his son was not among the survivors, nor had his body been yet recovered, but was supposed to be, with many others, beneath the raft of broken wreckage which, covered with thick flakes of viscid foam, was beginning to heave with the swell of the rising tide. He received the intelligence calmly, for the first bitterness was already past, and he was prepared for the worst.

It was now also that he heard for the first time the particulars of his grandson's rescue, and it was with feelings of the deepest gratitude that he offered the negro, a native of Barbadoes, called Horatio Nanton, but who usually went by the name of Sambo, a home at Burrscombe. Sambo, however, did not seem to think that he had done anything so very extraordinary, and, though he promised to go with him, and said that he would like

always to be with young massa, yet that he would not like to be altogether on land, as he was too fond of a sailor's life.

As, owing to the state of the tide, nothing more could be done that day, they walked up the hill to the farm house, and found Reggie sitting on his grandmother's lap before the fire, dressed in clothes which had been lent by the farmer's wife, as his own, though dry, were stiff with the salt water; his right hand was caressing the head of his dear Donnie, who was looking intently into his young master's face and occasionally relieving his feelings by a fond lick, while his left was clasped in that of his grandmother. They were not talking, for he was still half asleep, tired and exhausted with the events of the previous day, and the old lady was content so that she knew that he was safe in her arms. The child returned his grandfather's caress with warmth, and then laid his head again on her arm, and was soon asleep.

As she saw by her husband's face that he

had no news of her son, the mother forebore to ask; she had already heard from her kind hostess some of the particulars of the child's rescue, and she joined with her husband in offering the brave negro, who they felt had jeopardised his own life for their darling Reggie, a home at Burrscombe. At length, when Reginald had also joined in the request, he consented, at least for the present, to take up his abode with them.

As the whole party could not be accommodated at the farm house, they determined to wrap the child up warmly, and take him home with them, the idea of separation being too painful to be even hinted at, Mr. Maitland, to make room for him, having most considerately offered to walk home and show the negro the way. They arrived home a little after five, and were met at the door by Nanny, who folded her darling in her arms, and wept over him for very joy; he was immediately put into his own little bed, and, Nanny having brought him his tea, installed

herself by his side, saying that she should watch him during the night, in which duty Don intended evidently to have his share.

When they were alone together, Colonel A'Bear told his wife the steps which he had taken with regard to the recovery of their son's body; and it was with mingled feelings of sorrow and thanksgiving that they knelt together that night before retiring to rest, and prayed the prayer of resignation—"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the sun rose next day it was upon a mild and beautiful spring morning ; the sea, calm and quiet and smiling, as if to welcome the first sunbeam, looked as though an angry frown could never have ruffled its smooth and placid surface, while the bright and liquid sky above, just relieved by a few light fleecy clouds on the horizon, seemed as though its azure brightness could never have been marred by a fierce battle of the elements. Beautiful Bigbury bay never looked more lovely than as old Nix Jarvis and his son stood for a moment on the summit of Bolttail before proceeding to the scene of the shipwreck ; for the atmosphere was clear, and the rays of

the early sun, which tinted even the sparkling diamonds of the rippling sea with a ruby dye, were lighting up in the far distance the many coloured and variously shaded cliffs of the Cornish coast, which, overlapping one another, reached far away to the south and west. Below, the villages of outer and inner Hope, nestling in the angle of the picturesque cove where they are so snugly ensconced, and further the towers of Thurleston, and on the hill the spire of Bigbury met the eye; while a line of treacherous rocks, except where broken by the sands of Milton, Thurleston, Bantam, and S. Michael's rock or Burr Island, stretched away towards Plymouth Sound. Towering above all, the bleak and rugged outline of the tors of Dartmoor formed a fitting background to what, on a fine day, is one of the most lovely, though little known, views in beautiful Devon.

It must not be supposed, however, that old Nix stood there for any purpose of admiring the view, it was too common a sight to him.

No, he had stopped merely to whistle to his dog, who was chasing one of the numerous rabbits which abound on these shores, and was far too valuable an assistant, in the work which they had before them, to be left behind—his part of the business being to swim out and bring to land anything that was floating, and seemed worth examining. They began their work very systematically, having managed to reach the shore at some little distance from the cove where the wreck had taken place, which was now, since the arrival of the chief officer on the previous day, more carefully guarded. They had secured many articles which were portable, and hidden others to be carried off on future occasions, when young Nix proposed that, as the water was so still, they should examine an old smuggler's haunt in days gone by, a cave which ran a long way under the cliff, just at the entrance of the little bay on the opposite side to which the wreck of the "Cadmus" was lying. The dog preceded them, and a

howl which he quickly set up caused them to hasten their steps, and they were soon standing by the side of the dead body of a man, which was lying on the floor of the cave, with some remnants of the wreck and cargo, where they had been left by the receding waters. There was a quiet and placid look, almost a smile, upon the face, and the body was reclining in a sleeping attitude, with the right hand clasped across the breast, and the other still grasping a fragment of the wreck which had been instinctively seized by the strong swimmer in his death agony.

"We be in luck to-day, Nix," said the old man after a pause. "This here must be he for whom the reward was offered by the old gentleman yesterday."

"Yes, it be he for certain," answered the son slowly, taking the while a mental survey of the corpse. And, without any compunction, they commenced to search the body, but as they discovered nothing of any great value, they determined to leave everything as they

found it, and trust to Colonel A'Bear's generosity, in which they were not disappointed; for he rewarded them so munificently that old Nix was heard to say that it was the best day's work he had ever done, and that he thought he would go in for being honest during the rest of his life.

Before leaving they took the body up carefully, and moved it further up into the cave, whilst they made their way over the cliff to the water cove to notify their discovery to the chief officer of the coastguard; and once again the musical echoes of the gently curling ripples of the moving tide alone broke the voiceless silence of that sequestered crevice, which, with its rocky front, sandy floor, and rugged walls, covered with the dark green leaves of the *Asplenium marinum*, would have formed no unfitting mausoleum for the noble-hearted, but ill-starred Hugh A'Bear.

The coastguard men, as may be supposed, were not too well pleased that the anticipated

reward had thus slipped through their fingers, and blamed one another for not having thought of visiting the cave. However, as there was no help for it, the little boat belonging to the Hope station was manned, and the captain of the district, who had given strict orders that the body should be disturbed as little as possible, went with it to see that his orders were rigidly carried out. It was carefully lifted on board, and laid in the bottom of the boat ; and then the little craft set sail at once for Hope to save the heavy journey over the cliffs.

On their arrival at the landing place, the captain resolved to have the body conveyed to Burrscombe without delay ; so having made a temporary bier, the mortal part of Hugh A'Bear was placed upon it, and they at once set out on their journey, a young farmer of the neighbourhood having ridden on ahead to announce the approach of the sad procession.

The news of the discovery of the body

was received by Colonel A'Bear and his wife with feelings of deep thankfulness ; resignation to the will of the Almighty had already taken the place of the sorrow of despair. Many tears were shed over their much-loved son ; but they felt that Hugh was at rest and in peace, and were content to have it so. The anxious and determined look of the last few months had passed away from his face, and his mouth, usually so stern and inflexible, looked as though about to break into a smile ; so that little Reggie, who was brought in his nurse's arms to see his father once again, said, " Oh, Nanny, how happy dear papa looks—do you think that he knows I am looking at him ?" But Nanny did not trust herself to answer ; she feared to open her lips, lest she should give way ; so instead she gently placed her precious charge upon the bed, who threw his arms around his dead father's neck, and kissed his cold face ; and it was not without force that his faithful nurse could unwind his arms and carry him away again.

And then Nanny and her brother John, at their own request, were left alone with the dead to prepare him for his burial. It was with difficulty that they took his cold damp clothes from off him, as his right hand was so rigidly and tightly folded across his breast. Carefully and lovingly they did their office, and at length just above his heart, clasped beneath his hand, they found a miniature of his wife. The salt water had not damaged it, its crystal covering had been too well secured. It had been taken shortly before their marriage, and had been originally set in a bracelet, which she had worn with another containing a likeness of her husband as a companion. Ever since his wife's death he had constantly carried it about with him, in the position in which it was found; and when he had given his wife's jewels into his mother's keeping she had noticed that the miniature was wanting, so was not surprised to hear of its discovery.

"Ay, Nanny," said her mistress—as she

looked at the portrait resting in her hand—
“No wonder he had a smile on his face; I daresay his last thought was that he was going to meet her.”

“And maybe,” answered Nanny, “she had come to meet him.”

“Nay, Nanny, I think not so, but I trust that they are now in Paradise together; and I think that your discovery of this portrait beneath his hand shows that his last thoughts were not unhappy. I knew that Hugh loved his wife more dearly than perhaps he ever owned to himself until after she was taken from him.”

When they had said farewell to him but a few days previously, his father and mother in saying “good-bye” had felt in their hearts that they should most likely never see him more; and yet, when they came on the following day to look at him for the last time, how different were their feelings!

There is no way in which the realities of death can be more fully estimated than by

comparing it with that which is its type, viz., absence. Friends and relatives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, may leave us and we may leave them, and the sorrows of our leave-taking may seem to us as the very foretaste of the separation wrought by death, as we feel that most likely we have looked upon their faces for the last time in this world. Still, as long as they are in this world we have a certain consciousness of their being, which brightens our own existence and makes us happier, even though the letters which pass between us are few and far between—we often think of them, and so feel that they as often think of us. It is sad enough to think that parents and children must be separated, that brothers and sisters who were rocked in the same cradle, who sat in infancy by the same fire side, and prayed at the same mother's knee, and ran, and shouted, and played at the same games together, must yet fight the battle of life apart, bear their own cares and carry their

own burden. And yet, though the space which parts us be reckoned by thousands of miles, and the time by tens of years since we last saw one another, as long as they remain in this life there is just a possibility that we may meet again, and their very absence often makes the heart grow fonder. But the moment that we hear of their death we feel at once that the veil cast over all nations divides us, that between us and them there is a great gulf fixed. Absence may be, and is, a type of death—a foreshadowing of death—but how greatly do they differ! We sigh over the absent; but we weep over the dead. And such were the thoughts, not indeed expressed in words, but felt in all their stern reality by his father and mother as they stood and looked and wept, and then knelt together by the body of their much-loved son, Hugh A'Bear.

When the news of the loss of the “Cadmus” and the death of Hugh A'Bear was

noised abroad, the deep sorrow expressed on all sides was most widespread; but more especially in the city of Bristol, and the county of Somerset, where he was best known.

The funeral took place at Bearcroft, where he was laid beside his wife in the old churchyard. It was attended by many of the chief persons both of the city and county, and all the tenantry of the Bearcroft estates, and the poor for many miles round came as by a natural impulse to pay their last respects to the honoured dead; and as his brother Ralph (neither Reggie nor his grandfather, by the doctor's advice, had been allowed to attend) walked behind the bier as chief mourner, the tears which he shed were bitter indeed, for he felt that had he acted differently his brother would have been still alive. His brother's death, however, wrought a great change in him, for he was a wiser and better man from that day forward.

The city and county determined to erect memorials to him and his worthy father. The county resolved to add another folly in stone to the many which adorn the Somersetshire hills, to which the new owner of Bearcroft refused to subscribe; while the city decided to add another wing to the Bristol Hospital, the chief subscription to which was an anonymous donation of £5,000 under the signature of L. A., a gift from old Matthew on behalf of his little granddaughter Lucy, the heiress of Bearcroft.

Indeed, about this time, the minds of many persons were much exercised in trying to discover the giver of many large sums both in London and Lancashire to hospitals and other deserving charities. It was observed that they were always given under one or other of the following initials:—M. A., H. A., R. A., M. H. A., L. A., or K. A. Many guesses were made, but somehow or other none thought of old Matthew Adams, save

his daughter-in-law, and she respected too much the principles which urged his secrecy to attempt to break through it—"let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth."

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW weeks later in the year, Reggie was seated in the deep-set casement of one of the windows of the old dining room at Burrscombe, on one of those lovely days in May when spring is hardly over, and summer not yet quite begun—when Nature, clothed with the fresh bright green of the new-born leaf, seems on every side bursting into vigorous life, and almost makes us happy in spite of ourselves, and willing to live for a time in the present, forgetful of the past, and almost careless of the future.

The boy had apparently recovered from the effects of the fearful scenes in which he had been an actor, but those who were constantly

with him knew that it was otherwise; he was timid where he was brave before, he disliked to be left alone, and a very little thing, even the opening or shutting of a door, would cause him to start. Nanny, who spent many an hour watching by his bedside, was often rendered very anxious by observing him start in his bed as though frightened, and sometimes even he would awake with a smothered scream. Medical advice was procured from Plymouth, and the minds of his grandparents were set at ease when they were told that his present state was only the natural effects of what he had gone through upon his nerves, and that in the quietness of Burrscombe he would soon recover, although it was just possible that they might not be entirely removed for many years. His nurse, however, was far from being satisfied, and as the physician left, she muttered to herself, "Doctors won't cure him," and determined from that time forward to direct all her energies to discover the causes of his disquietude.

Sitting with him on the morning in question was little Lorna Maitland, and her brother Edric, who generally spent some portion of each day at Burrscombe. They were just as fair as he was dark, his dark brown hair and eyes, derived from his Norman forefathers, being replaced in them by the not less beautiful fairest of fair hair (with just the slightest tinge of auburn in the case of the little lady) and the bluest of blue eyes, which told of a Saxon ancestry, as a neighbouring clergyman said of Lorna to the colonel, it was the smallest amount of red and the largest amount of blue that he had ever seen in combination. They had been sitting together for a longer time than usual, although the bright sun was tempting them to a run in the garden, for his grandfather had presented Reggie that morning with a cat, that ever afterwards went by the name of Cadmus, and a canary—the only living things that had been discovered on board the ill-fated vessel when she had been boarded on the day after the shipwreck, and which he

had purchased from the finder on the previous evening at his own terms.

After a hearty meal of bread and milk, and a careful rubbing of her nose against everything in the room, she—for in Devonshire everything is a he, except a Tom cat, and that's a she—allowed herself to be put to sleep after a somewhat uncomfortable fashion on the little boy's lap, in which position they were discovered by his young friends. The cat served Lorna—who was as loveable in disposition as she was lovely in appearance—for a text, from which to draw from Reggie a full account of the loss of the "Cadmus," and the way in which he had been saved, although both she and her brother had been warned by their mother not to allude to it. The occasion, however, had been irresistible, and they had listened with breathless attention to the recital, and from that day forward it was a subject of frequent conversation between them. But far from doing him any harm, it was the commencement of his recovery; the fact of

the matter being that the more the subject had been avoided as something dreadful and to be forgotten, so much the more prolonged had been the effect of what he had gone through upon his nerves: but directly it became, as far as talking about it was concerned, like any other event in his short life, and that he could pour out the story of his griefs and terror into the ready ears of his listeners, who gave him in return all the sympathy of their warm little hearts, it ceased to be a bug-bear.

Edric Maitland, who was just about the same age as Reggie, had brought with him a book of fairy tales, and they were just about to enter on the subject of fairies or no fairies, the first matter for discussion in a child's debating society, when his grandmother told him not to miss the whole of the fine morning, but to take his little friends for a run before dinner. So the subject had to be postponed to another occasion, and having got their hats and called Donnie, they were about to hasten

out by the back door, when the sound of Nanny's voice, pitched in a very high key, attracted them to the kitchen, where they found her in high dudgeon, gesticulating violently, and assaulting with her tongue, although apparently ready to follow suit with her hands also, an old woman with a most forbidding countenance, who was standing in the doorway, with one hand on the latch, and the other raised in an attitude of cursing or blessing, but apparently the former; while a man, the village carrier from Kingsbridge, whose stock-in-trade consisted of a donkey and panniers, was trying to keep the peace.

"Geet along wi' thee, vor a vore right 'ooman," was Nanny shouting with all the force of her native vernacular. "Thee wicked 'ooman to prate thic way. Th' A'Bearz punizhed vor their zins! Whoi, the wole country knowed that maister moigt have kept it all if he had had the moind to. Go and read thoi Boible, thou vond 'ooman, and thou'll vind, that wom the Lord loveth He chaztoizeth,

that itz no zoine that the Lord is angry wi' any one when He bringz mizvortune upon them. Hazn't ever read that itz th' wicked that never come into no mizvortune loike other volk? Th' A'Bearz punizhed vor their zins, what next indeed?" and she took a step forward as though to put her out of the kitchen by force.

The old woman, however, was already half way out of the door, and as she left the house, said with a threatening gesture, pointing to Reggie at the same time—

"You needn't trouble to put me forth, but the Lord, as ye call Him, ain't done with ye yet, nor with that youngster there, so mark my words," and then, slamming the door, departed, muttering to herself.

The children stood looking at the scene in amazement and some little fear, while Lorna said to Reggie in a frightened whisper—

"It's old Doffinby Camp, the witch-woman, who lives down in the village at Sandstone."

The departure of old Doffinby, and the

coming of her young master, soothed the faithful Nanny's ruffled feelings, and as she looked wistfully at him, said to herself—

“I knew that it was not doctor's physic that he wanted : but I'll stop her.”

Jabez Steer, the carrier, had not been either an unmoved spectator of the scene. He was generally considered by his friends to be half a fool and half a philosopher, but more of the former than the latter ; indeed, there was a saying current in the neighbourhood, that if you put Jabez and his donkey into a bag and shook them, it would be a toss-up as to which would come out the greatest fool. As the old woman closed the door, he turned to Nanny and said—

“Don't mind her, Miss Woolcote, Doffinby is just a poor foolish old creature, a good sort of woman enough, until a few years ago when a neighbour took it into her head that her child was bewitched, and went to the white witch of Brixham, who told her to get a black fowl and cook it, and stick its heart full

of pins ; that the person who came to the door whilst it was cooking would be the witch, and then the charm would be broken. As ill-luck would have it, Doffinby came to borrow some household article, and has ever since been looked on by her neighbours with suspicion as a witch, until I believe that the poor old creature, who is rapidly getting into her second childhood, really thinks that she has the power of the evil eye. It is a very sad state of things, ma'am, and I am afraid that you will think that you have come into a very neglected neighbourhood." And then, turning to Reggie, he touched his hat, and said, "You need have no fear of her, my young master, she is in the last stage, as the poet says, 'sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans everything,' she can do you no harm."

He then commenced fumbling in the pockets of his old coat, and after some time produced a tattered pocket-book, from one of the recesses of which he brought forth a slip of paper, apparently a page out of an old ledger,

and, handing it to Reggie with a low bow, asked him to give it to the colonel's lady with his humble obedience, as a slight tribute of sympathy from a lowly follower of the poetic art.

As the composition was never intended to meet the eye of the public, Jabez' humility must be respected. It was an evidence, however, to those who read it, that Jabez was far more of a philosopher than a fool. The conclusion generally arrived at in the matter depended altogether upon which side you considered his character. As far as making his way in the world was concerned, and for a man in his profession, he had had every opportunity, he was a foolish fellow enough; many had tried to assist him, but without success; and at last by common consent, to which Jabez was perfectly agreeable, he was left to follow his own devices. On the other hand, he was very much of a philosopher—a sort of village Diogenes, but without his conceit; who was content so that he had,

enough to eat and drink, and devoted his spare time to writing scraps of poetry, and to the acquisition of all sorts of odds and ends of knowledge, apparently for the mere pleasure of acquiring it. Mr. Maitland found him very useful, as Jabez kept a night school, then an uncommon institution, which he conducted on his own principles, but very successfully. His great grief was that he had once been discovered by the vicar in a state of the most helpless intoxication, having been enticed by some young farmers in the neighbourhood to drink a glass of drugged spirits, his faithful donkey standing by his side with panniers full of parcels "to be delivered immediately." He called at the parsonage on the next day to apologise for having been overtaken in a fault, which he assured Mr. Maitland should never occur again, and finished, "but as the poet says, 'to err is human, to forgive divine.'"

Reggie from this day forward became a great ally of his, and many a long ramble did he take over the cliffs with the trio of little

friends, telling them all the legends of the place, and showing them the wonders of the fields and of the sea-shore; and of an evening he would point out the stars, and tell them their names, and some of the marvels of astronomy. Thus it was by the assistance of his humble friend more than any one else, that Reginald A'Bear "nourished a youth sublime with the fairy tales of science, and the long results of time." In his after life he often owned the value of that early friendship.

The negro, Horatio, who had saved his life, after staying for about a week at Burrscombe, had gone to sea in a Salcombe vessel, after promising to come to see them again on his return to port. Nanny, in the bottom of her heart, was the least little bit jealous of him, and did not attempt to conceal her dislike of his foreign manner and black skin, which was one reason that he left so soon.

That evening she held a long conversation over the kitchen fire with her brother John, and they both agreed that Master Reggie was

bewitched, and that something must be done, and that immediately, to counteract the spell. They both scrupulously broke the bottoms of their eggs for fear the witches should go to sea in them and raise a storm; and for a similar reason, whenever they cut a slice of bread, religiously placed the loaf right side uppermost, for fear that owing to their negligence a vessel should go to the bottom. And many like superstitions, which still linger among the peasantry of the West, they observed. A few days previously, Lorna and her brother had been much amused at seeing her performing the part of wart-charmer to the son of the gardener. She first placed a pin in each, 14 in number, with which she afterwards pierced an apple, and then gave it to the pig, and as she watched him devour it remarked that the charm was of no value unless performed by one of the opposite sex; but that she knew many equally efficacious. Her mistress had often reasoned with her on the folly of such practices; but

her excuse was that there was a great deal of religion in them.

As it happened that John was going into Somersetshire to fetch Silvertail which the old steward had purchased and was going to send as a present to Reggie, they finally determined that he should use the opportunity to call on Hester Shaw, the celebrated witch woman of Somerton, whose fame was well established in their old neighbourhood, and procure from her a charm to counteract the spells of Doffinby Camp. Originally the wife of a sailor who had been drowned in the West Indies, of whose hair—for pigtails had not then gone out of fashion in the British Navy—her wig was said to be made, Hester had afterwards married a soldier, and it was while living at Corfu, as servant to an officer in her husband's regiment, that she had learnt what she professed to know of the black art from a Greek, in whose house they had lodged.

Reggie's joy may be imagined when, about

a week later, he saw his old favourite led up to the door by John. It was quite an unexpected pleasure, as he had not known of its coming, and he immediately rode down to the vicarage to display his new possession.

It was with some anxiety that Nanny had awaited her brother's return, and John was not long in telling her the history of his visit to the wise woman of Glastonbury. He had found her as usual surrounded by her seven black cats, and she had told him in answer to his queries that there was no doubt that the boy was suffering from the evil spells of Doffinby Camp, but that she would either cure him or stop her; that he was to make a little wax image, into which he was to stick a pin every night, and then the restlessness would disappear by degrees. Between them they made it, not very artistically, and night by night put a pin into it until it looked like a porcupine, and as the restlessness from natural causes gradually left the child, Nanny of course put it down to the spell. Poor old

Doffinby died during the following winter, which was very severe, but Nanny felt no qualms of conscience in the matter, for although she thought her death was caused in the main by the wax image, yet, as she said to John, it would have had no effect upon her, if she had not been guilty.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUFFICIENT number of years had passed away since the events narrated in the previous chapters, to make Reginald and his friend Edric Maitland nearly fourteen years of age, whilst Lorna, who was about a year and a half younger, was just about to enter her teens, and the time had come when they were to be separated for the first time since their friendship had commenced.

Many changes had also taken place during this time.

Colonel A'Bear had died and had been buried at Bearcroft, so that his uncle Ralph was now his nephew's sole guardian, who was trying in every way to make up for his former errors. To his own children, as is

often the case with those who in early life have been over-indulgent to themselves, he was strict and stern, though from the purest motives ; but the very sight of Reggie seemed to have an almost magically soothing effect upon him. Of Reggie's fortune—for his grandfather had been able to leave him no inconsiderable sum of money—he was more careful even than of his own, to lay it out to the best advantage ; and as there would be a long minority, he had every hope of being able to double it. The funeral of the late possessor of Bearcroft, at his own request, had been very private ; only his own immediate kinsfolk followed the coffin. Old Matthew Adams, through his daughter-in-law, had offered the hospitalities of Bearcroft to Ralph A'Bear and his nephew at the time, and the letter had been so kindly worded that they could not help accepting the invitation ; and, when pressed to prolong their stay, although it was a source of much pain to the uncle, he consented, seeing the great interest

that his nephew, whom the old merchant seemed to take much interest in, found in visiting all his old haunts ; and many an hour he spent at the graves of his parents.

When, on his return to Burrscombe, his grandmother asked him one day what he thought of Miss Lucy Adams, the heiress of Bearcroft, he, just fresh from the golden hair and blue eyes of Lorna Maitland, answered--

“ Oh, I didn’t take much notice of her ; she was just an ugly little black thing, and always ran away and hid herself when she saw me ; so I don’t think she’s got too much sense.” But this boyish logic was wrong.

Old Matthew had also been failing for some time ; and on a beautiful evening in the beginning of the September of the same year, he sat with his little granddaughter on his knee watching the sun go down over the distant hills through the window of the library ; and when it had sunk away, he still continued sitting for a few minutes as if buried in thought, and then, after pressing his

withered lips to the child's chubby cheeks, gave her to her mother, saying to himself more than once—

“Ah, Henry, it was a foolish bargain.”

The same evening he called his daughter-in-law, and she came and sat down on a stool at his feet; and while he fondly stroked her hair, he said—

“Kate, dost thou see this box,” pointing to one on the table beside him. “I have one more charge to give thee, and as I know my time is short, I will give it thee at once, and then I shall have nothing more to think of in this world, but to get ready for the next”—and he waited a moment, while his lips moved in prayer—and she sat motionless for fear of disturbing him, and, almost forgetting about the box, looked at him the while with the deepest affection. After a while he commenced again, “Dost thou see this box, Kate? Thou knowest that thy little Lucy may not live out half her days; if, then, she should die young without leaving children behind

her, thou wilt open the box ; but should she reach the age of twenty-five, thou shalt destroy it unopened. Mr. John Gruggen, of Manchester, is the only person who knows the contents." She took the box and promised faithfully to carry out his wishes ; and he could not have put it into better hands. As she put it away carefully that night, it would not have been human nature if she had not closely examined it.

It was a small oaken box, the lid carefully screwed down, with a seal on the top of each screw : but, then, as if ashamed of her scrutiny, she folded it carefully in paper, tied, sealed it, and put it away with the full determination never even to cut the string, unless obliged, according to her promise.

Before the autumnal equinoctial gales had set in, the old man had breathed his last, on just such another calm and peaceful evening as that on which he had put the box into her hands, and so calmly and peacefully did his soul pass away, that those who were in the

room did not even perceive that the end was come. He had only taken to his bed for a few days. Early in the afternoon he had requested his daughter-in-law to read to him the eighth chapter of Romans. This she did, one verse at a time, while the old man lay motionless, and pondered over it—so motionless, indeed, and with hardly any sign of breathing, that she more than once rose to see if he were still alive—and then he would raise his hand feebly, and she would read another, and so moment by moment, and verse by verse, his life calmly ebbed away. At last she read the concluding sentence, “That not even death can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord;” and then she stopped and all was so still, with a stillness that almost could be felt; while there came from the old man a little sigh, so gentle that it would not have been heard but for the solemn quietness, more gentle far than the first breath of a new born babe—and,

then, all was still again—the spirit of Matthew Adams, the onetime hardheaded, hardhearted miser of Manchester had returned to Him who gave it.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the afternoon of the last Sunday in July, and the last that Reginald would spend at home for some time—indeed he was going to leave Burrscombe on the following Monday—so that the time for separation was coming very near. The two boys were looking forward to it as a sort of entrance into the world, and were constantly discussing, with all sorts of pleasant anticipations, the new scenes and the new life which they were about to take part in; while the little girl, though she said little about it to any one but her mother, looked forward to the parting with anything but pleasurable feelings, for she felt that they would be different

when they returned, and would not then care to be with her so much.

Edric and Reginald had been carefully educated by Mr. Maitland, who, besides having taken honours at Oxford in both classics and mathematics, had a fair knowledge of modern languages also. Edric was going to Tiverton, then the first-school in the West of England, where nearly all the Devonshire gentry of those days were educated.

It had been originally intended that Reginald should have accompanied his friend, but the boy had made up his mind to be a soldier, like his father and grandfather before him; and, much to the grief of his grandmother, interest had been used to procure him a nomination to the Royal Military Academy of Woolhurst. He had worked very hard during the previous year, but had been in no sense crammed, and Mr. Maitland felt sure that, although he had taken a low position in the entrance examination in May,

the solid foundation he had given him would be sure to tell in the long run. He could not, however, help feeling very anxious about Reginald's future. Of his own boy he had few doubts, as he was sturdier in body and character than his friend; but Reginald was cast in a finer mould, was far more sensitive, more easily worked upon by outward circumstances, was often irresolute and wayward, and he dreaded what might be the consequences of his sudden plunge into public school life. The brighter the steel, so much the quicker will it rust; he feared, therefore, that contamination, should he fall in with a bad set of boys, might be fearfully rapid. Had he known the state of Woolhurst at this time, he would have used all the influence he possessed to prevent him going to a place where boys in years were men in vice, and thought that the best way to prove their title to manhood was to indulge in the wickednesses of their elders.

He determined to say a few words of

solemn warning to the boy before he left, which might sink down into his heart, and, besides warning him privately, determined to say them also in the last sermon that he would hear before leaving home, which, if he would take to himself, would make, he hoped, a lasting impression upon him.

“Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward,” was the text on that Sunday evening.

After mentioning the circumstances under which the words were spoken, and applying them to the whole history of the children of Israel, explaining how all their after misfortunes might be traced to their constant disobedience to its spirit, he went on to show that these words “go forward” were written on every flower and leaf, and indeed on every thing in nature, and then proceeded to give them a personal application, finishing something in this way—and as he drew near the conclusion, and thought of his own boy and Reginald, both of whom he could see were

listening very attentively, the father got the better of the preacher, and his voice faltered slightly; while Reginald, who felt that what was coming was intended for him, put his hand into his grandmother's.

"I have yet a word or two to say, more especially to the young, upon the necessity of *perseverance*. I have already shown you the necessity not only of beginning well, but also of resolutely persevering all through your lives, of constantly going forward unto the end. It is a hard lesson to learn, one of the most difficult, and the first lesson which you will have to learn is one which every striving man or woman has to find the need of sooner or later; it is to *persevere in spite of indifference and coldness of heart*. Even the truest Christians have such times of depression. Thus far, in our quiet and beautiful neighbourhood, you have been kept from many outward temptations which assail the people of God in those great cities and other places whither so many of our young people go even-

tually. Then, when temptation comes, will your principles be put to the test. God grant that you may stand firm !

“ I have often told you before how to resist temptation, so I will not allude to it further now. But of this you may be quite certain, that seasons of coldness, deadness, and perhaps even indifference, will come upon you. What are you to do then ? Are you to say to yourself, God cares for me no longer, He is taking His holy Spirit from me ? Are you to begin to act with irresolution, and then to give up persevering—to cease to try to go forward ? Not so. You must learn to persevere in spite of coldness and indifference, and your warm feelings will come back again. Sometimes, even at noon it is dark, and we cannot see the sun, and, did we not know better, might think that it had ceased to shine upon us ; but what is the reason of the gloom ? It is that there are clouds in the way which prevent its rays from reaching us ; and so, also, if the rays of God’s love seem not to be shining upon us, the

reason is that there is something wrong with our hearts, some cloud in the way. But we must not give in, we must go on praying, we must go on striving, and then the cloud will pass away, and we shall be happy again. Persevere then, try and go forward in spite of coldness.

“But there is another lesson which some of you will have to learn, I hope not many”—and he paused a moment, and his voice faltered again, and grew very solemn, while the hearts of the two boys beat more quickly—“it is this : you may have to learn to persevere, *to try and go forward in spite of your sins*. Perhaps the time may come when you will have been overtaken in some fault, you may not have been watching or praying as you ought, so that when the temptation shall come you will be unprepared, and so will fall beneath it. Now what must you do in such a case? The devil will tempt you to despair, he will whisper to you that you have sinned so deeply that you cannot hope for forgiveness. But you must

not listen to him for a moment; you must learn even then to persevere in spite of your sins; you must never despair, though your back be bowed down and your limbs be feeble, but must still strive, must still go on, must still persevere. We might be indeed inclined to despair in such a case except for one reason, and what is that?" he paused again, and then said, repeating it a second time—" *He who came to save us, loves us in spite of our sins.*"

"If you can but remember that truth in such an hour, you will not be able to despair, but you will rise again, you will press forward, you will persevere. Oh, then, take my text as your motto for life, and may you often hear God's voice speaking to you as to His people of old when they stood in terror by the Red Sea, and saying to you 'go forward'—and when you hear, God grant that you may obey."

After service was over, while the two ladies walked on towards the village, the boys turned

down the path which led to the sea shore, and Mr. Maitland, taking Lorna by the hand, said that he would follow them in about half an hour's time, thinking it better to leave them together for a while.

After they had gone about two hundred yards, they crossed a stile, and followed a bye path which led to a favourite haunt, a nook in the cliffs, looking across the bay to Burr Island, a delightful spot, which even in winter, if there was the least sun, was warm ; and where in summer they bathed, and even in the hottest day could find the shadow of some great rock to sit under.

As soon as they had crossed the stile Reginald put his arm round Edric's shoulder, who was not long in doing the same, and then said, for they had not spoken before—"Oh, Edric, I am sure that was intended for me."

"I think father meant it for both of us," he answered.

"But, I'm sure you don't need it so much. I think perseverance comes easier to you,

but as for me, I'm always thinking of two things at once. Sometimes when I am going to do a thing something else comes into my mind, and unless I think about it I am just as likely to do that instead. 'Wayward and irresolute'—that just describes me exactly, I'm always making up my mind to act differently, but in a few days I seem to forget all about it."

"Oh, no, Reggie," broke in Edric, "you are not so bad as you wish to make yourself out to be, for I heard father say to mother only yesterday how much improved you were during the last year, that if you had not stuck hard to your books you would never have passed the examinations, and you know, as father said, it was never easy to persevere."

"Well, yes, you see I got to like my work, and I didn't wish to be plucked—but in other things I'm a pretty good hand at beginning, but the difficulty is to keep going on. Even in saying my prayers, sometimes all sorts of things come into my mind, and instead of

praying I think about them, and so get into bed without ever having really prayed at all"—and then, throwing himself down on the grass, exclaimed with a great sigh, "Yes, it is dreadfully difficult to persevere."

"Well, you know, that is what father told us to-day. I often feel just the same as you, but then father tells me to begin all over again, and say them over in my mind, without speaking aloud, and I generally find my thoughts come back again. And, besides which, he tells me that in everything I have to do I should always try and think that I am going to conquer, and then half the battle will be over—so you must not begin by thinking that you are going to be beaten."

"Oh, no," answered Reggie, "I don't intend to begin like that, but," and he added with another great sigh, "it is dreadful to think that you must be always going forward, that you can never stop for a minute. I wish that one could just glide along like that vessel," pointing to one which was passing at the time.

“ I think that you would soon get tired of such a hum-drum sort of life ; I like to look forward and think that there are some things to be overcome. Besides which, you don't know how many storms she may have passed through, and see she will have to tack now before she can pass the Point. You know, as old Nix told us the other day, the great thing to do when we saw a squall coming was to have our hands on the rudder and her head to the wind.”

Here Lorna joined them, her father having been called away to see a sick parishioner, and sat down between them. Her coming changed the conversation, and they began to talk about Reggie's departure on the following day for Bath, where he was going to stay with his uncle for a few days, before proceeding to Woolhurst at the end of the week, about which time Mr. Maitland was going to take his own son to Tiverton.

The little girl, who was very sorrowful, not to say almost lachrymose at the very thoughts

of the coming separation, sat listening to them for a short time, and then chimed in—

“I can’t bear to think of your going away at all, and I don’t like to hear you both talking about it as if it were something so delightful. I know it will be quite different when you come back; and mamma says that she thinks it is quite time for me to give up rambling all over the country, and to settle down. I’m sure I think it’s a great pity we are obliged to grow big”—and the young lady looked so very melancholy that her brother could not help laughing.

Now Edric, though a really superior boy, had, what is very common to lads at his age, a most decided opinion that boys were in every way superior to girls—little thinking that in a few short years one of these little girls would be able to bring him to her feet with a single touch of the hand or glance of the eye—and he said—

“Of course it will be different; girls can’t play cricket, or swim, or scale cliffs after

gull's nests, and lots of things girls can't do that boys can. I quite expect when we come back to see you in long dresses, a regular little bread-and-butter miss, like Miss Lacetight, as I call her, opposite, who sits so quiet and demure, and can't look at you, and can only answer 'yes,' and 'no.' "

"Oh, Edric," cried the little girl, while her eyes filled with tears, and as her brother kissed them away, saying that he didn't really mean it.

Reggie said, "I am sure, Lorny, I shall not be a bit different when I come back; I shall be just as glad to walk and ride with you as ever, I shall never alter in the least; and you are to have Silvertail whenever you like, and John says that he shall be delighted to bring him down to the vicarage whenever you want him"—and, indeed, he felt that he could never be different, and in his heart thought Edric a little cruel.

In a few more minutes the sun went down over the cliffs of Cornwall in one of those

brilliant sunsets which are often to be witnessed on this coast. They stood up to see the crimson ball of fire sink out of sight, and then turned towards home. Before another hour was over Reginald had said "good-bye" to his friends, with many a promise to write frequently; and though very sorrowful indeed, felt that it would never do for a person who was about to wear Her Majesty's uniform to show it. As for Lorna, she felt she should have liked to have thrown her arms round his neck, and given him a kiss, but not being able to do it, which was another of the evils of growing up, had to be contented with the wish; and when her mother came to look at her, before retiring to rest, she saw that her little girl had cried herself to sleep. It was her first great trouble. Another came upon her, but of a more purely mental character, about a week or so afterwards, which she kept to herself. As she was sitting in the same nook watching the ever varying surface of the sea, her only

companion the flock of sheep by which she was surrounded, the thought suddenly entered her mind as to which she missed the most, Reginald or her brother. The little maiden was much perplexed, and sat for a long time thinking over the matter, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. She felt quite certain that she ought to have missed Edric the most, and tried to reason herself into thinking that she did ; but as she remembered how fond Edric was of teasing, which Reggie never indulged in, and that it was Reggie who had led the pony and taught her to ride, and was always ready to assist her in clambering over the rocks, and indeed almost to anticipate all her wishes, she could not decide, and felt that it was another of the evils of growing up. In the end she determined, with a sort of juvenile-feminine casuistry, to leave the matter undecided, and to suppose that she missed them both equally.

The nook just mentioned was consecrated in the rural imagination to the Pixies, and

although Lorna did not really believe in such things, she could not help the thought arising that perhaps they had put the notion into her head ; so then and there made up her mind to avoid solitary musings in so dangerous a place for the future—Pixies or no Pixies, that spot had much to do with the life of Reginald A'Bear.

We are born into the world with certain natural characteristics, differing even in the members of the same family, just as they often differ in appearance, and for much about the same reason. For just as we take after father or mother, or some paternal or maternal ancestor in personal appearance, so we do also in natural disposition. Still, these points of character may be very much modified by the scenes amid which we may live, or through which we may pass, or by the dispositions of those with whom we may be brought into contact, and more especially as long as our bodies continue to grow.

It is then, and not till then, as a general.

rule, until the body has ceased to grow, that the character can in any great degree be said to be formed. And it is also a remarkable fact that those who come soonest to maturity of body come soonest also to maturity of mind, not that anything is gained by it in the long run. It is at this period of life, too, although the mind may receive a bias from early impressions, that opinions are formed, or, at any rate, considerably re-cast, and when those with whom we are associated, especially if they are superior to us in mental attainments, have the greatest power in moulding them.

Now Reginald A'Bear was just such a boy as might either grow into a great and noble man, or else, if he once commenced to fall, might sink very low; one of those characters which could be easily marred in the making, and which are too often misunderstood, even by parents. There could be no intermediate state with him even on earth—even here it must be either heaven or hell. Naturally

very impressible and sensitive, which characteristics the scenes he had passed through had intensified, Mr. Maitland might well await with anxiety the issue of his sudden plunge into public school life. Let us see whether he passed the breakers as successfully as when carried on the back of the brave Sambo.

CHAPTER X.

“ Royal Military Academy, Woolhurst,
“ August 20th, 184—.

“ DEAR EDRIC,—

“ You would have received a letter from me before, only I have not had very much time for writing long letters, and of course I have been obliged to write to grandmother, and last Saturday I wrote to Lorny, but not such a long one as this is going to be. I have such lots to tell you that I think I had better begin at the very beginning. Well, the day before I came here, Uncle Ralph and I went up from Bath to London, and stayed the night at the White Horse Cellar, in Piccadilly, but I didn't sleep very much, I

was thinking of so many things. Next day we were up pretty early, and went down the river, which I enjoyed very much, and landed near the dockyard, and took a fly up to the Academy, where there were several more new cadets, the rest of them wern't obliged to come till later in the day. The principal thing that we came for seemed to me to be measured for our uniform, which is the same as the Artillery, blue, with a red stripe, and to be shown our rooms, and to pay 10s. to the cricket club. A lot of good that will do me, as all we can do is to long-stop against our will.

“My room is at the very bottom of the fifth division, facing the quadrangle, where there are a lot of guns and mortars. Except the three corporals, who have rooms to themselves, there are none but cadets who have just entered in this division. There are two fellows in the room with me, their names are Charles O'Connor, who is an Irishman; he was educated on the Common, and is such a

jolly fellow, and the other is called William Forester, and comes from Cheltenham College. He was second on the list, and is very clever. We each have a corner, and the iron bedsteads are turned up against the wall during the day; there is a table in the middle with four drawers, and four cupboards with drawers under them opposite the fire-place.

“ After we had seen the room, uncle and I got into the fly again, and we went over the arsenal and dockyard—the dockyard isn’t so big as Plymouth—and then after a good dinner, as it was getting late, uncle took me up again to the Academy and left me there. The other two fellows had come, and flies were driving up one after the other as fast as could be. There was another cadet in the room when I came in, who had been a great friend of Forester’s, at Cheltenham; but he told him that things were quite different here, and that it would be considered cool for them to be seen walking together. After he was gone, the servant came and let down the beds, and

the corporal, who lives in the next room to ours, came and told us to stand at the bottom of our beds, and when the officer came round to answer to our names. In a short time we heard them coming, and whilst they were upstairs, the corporals of the other divisions, who were outside in the quadrangle, came to the window, and one of them called Forester and then O'Connor, up to the window, and asked their names, and then gave each of them a punch in the head through the bars; he then called me, but when he heard my name, told me I might go. Directly they were gone, and we were locked in, O'Connor jumped up, rushed about the room, shook his fist after them, called them all sorts of dreadful names, and then, after having pummelled into the bed to relieve his feelings, as he said, sat down and said, 'there, that is what we have to endure for a year and a half.'

"And, oh, Edric, if half what O'Connor says is true, and I am afraid it is, as his brother has only just got his commission, this

is a most awfully wicked place. They bully us whenever they get a chance, and we are in the worst room for it of the whole division. We can be bullied for a year and a half, during which time we are young cadets, and then we are made old cadets, and our turn comes. I am dreadfully afraid that I shall never be able to persevere. I shall try very hard, but everything seems against me here. I could never have believed that boys—at least we are all men here—could ever have been so bad and cruel.

“We each have a desk to ourselves in the class room, and the first three days of the week are given to mathematics, and the last three to drawing and fortification, and then we have French, German, and history in the evening. I can do the mathematics and French the best, and the mathematical master of my class says that I must have been well taught, so I hope to get up some places. It seems to me that it is nothing but work, work; drill, drill; bully, bully; from morning till

night; and O'Connor says that it will be much worse when we get into the other divisions.

"The sergeant who drills us, whenever he talks or gives any command, keeps time with us as we are marching, something in this way, 'Right—Left—Right—Left—Keep silence—No talking—Right—Left—Number 3—You have lost it—You've got it—Now keep it—Right—Left—Right—Left'—and so on over and over again, with an oath in between every now and then. He is always admiring his figure, and is awfully conceited. We all hate the drills.

"The reason why I did not get my head punched the first night was that the corporal, Hill is his name, has been asked to look after me. Not that I shall ever get much looking after here. Last Wednesday he came round collecting money for the racquet courts, which we dare not put our noses into, and for the band which plays in the library, which only the old cadets go to hear, and he let me off the subscriptions, and said by way of advice,

‘Don’t be cool, and attend to your work.’ Everything is *cool* here, so O’Connor says. If your strap isn’t under your chin, or your coat is unbuttoned, or you don’t come when you are called, or don’t do as you are bid, even if you can’t help it, you get a hiding all the same.

“The time I like best is when we go of an evening to the workshops and gymnasium, and learn fencing, and turning, and gymnastics, as we are in a kind of undress, and have on a loose sort of jacket and slippers, and as the sergeant is always there we can’t get bullied; but we have often to run the gauntlet of a lot of fellows standing outside the 1st and 2nd divisions as we go back to our rooms. But I must tell you about our first bathe. We were, all towels in hand, marched across the common, and all those who could swim had to jump in and swim to the end of the bathing place and back again, while all we who couldn’t swim, or only a very little, had one after the other to walk to the end of a

spring board and jump off. The fellow before me had to be pushed in. He looked as if he had never bathed before, so when it came to my turn, I took a header, and down I went, but never came to the bottom, although it is only ten feet deep, and soon came up again, and when the sergeant threw me the rope you may be sure that I was not long in catching it. Then I was dragged out, and had a rope put round my body, when he taught me to use my arms, and afterwards took hold of a rope stretched across, when I learnt to use my legs. He says that I ought to be able to swim a little in three or four lessons.

“We are only allowed to go out of the bounds once a week into the country, and once a fortnight into the town, when we have to get a pass ‘to permit gentleman cadet Reginald A’Bear to pass beyond the bounds this day for the purpose of going into the country’—and the officer on duty signs it. O’Connor knows every place about here, as he was at school on the Common for three

years, and we generally walk out together, when we can get by the fellows playing cricket. And now I think I have told you all, two whole sheets and one nearly crossed. Mind you write me a long one, too, dear old fellow. But oh, Edric, this is an awfully wicked place, and one dreadful thing is that we never go to church, at least, it is not a bit like church, for we have service in the dining hall, which is a splendid room, with stained glass windows, and stands of arms arranged in different patterns on the walls, but it is where we have our meals, and the pulpit is just a place covered with a flag. It doesn't seem to do me any good at all. How I miss the dear old church at home. I do think everything is against me here. When you write home don't say anything about the bullying, as it will only trouble them.

“Your affectionate friend,

“REGINALD A'BEAR.

“P.S.—You'll never guess what we do with the night caps. No one ever wears them,

but we run a string through them which makes them into a sort of bag, and boil eggs in them in the copper, as we have tea in our own rooms, which is the jolliest meal in the day."

Such was Reginald's experience during the first fortnight, and the opinions that he had formed of the Academy during the brief space of time that he had been a cadet: nor did he ever see cause to alter them materially. Before he had been there long, many strange ideas, which before had formed no part of, were added to his philosophy. To retain moral health in the midst of an unhealthy and vitiated atmosphere became daily a more difficult task. "Oh, how difficult it is to persevere," was the constant burden of his private thoughts. O'Connor could not understand his new friend at all, but put down what he considered his queerness to the fact of his never having been at school before he came up. Light-hearted, with no very strong notions of right and wrong, and taking things

very much as they came as a matter of course, he would leave when he obtained his commission, most likely no better—but not very much worse than when he came up—his three years on the Common having served as a regular apprenticeship to Academy ways and doings. Forester was a boy much about the same stamp as Edric Maitland; and, except in their room, Reginald saw but little of him, for three other boys had come up with him from Cheltenham, with one or other of whom he usually walked, and as his father lived in London, he always went up on Saturday afternoon, returning late on Sunday evening, and so was preserved from many temptations. Well would it have been for Reginald if he could have done the same.

On the Sunday following that on which the letter had been written, as they were sitting in their room, two old cadets came into the quadrangle, and when they had looked round and seen that the coast was clear, they came to the window, and told the boys that they

were to take it in turns, or week about, as it might suit them, to come over to the first division, and brush their clothes, and fill their bath every morning; and one of them, with a round, unhealthy face, and Mongolian looking eyes, by name Todd (but who was more frequently called "the Toad," a name which he had brought with him from school), added as they turned away, "Mind, if you don't come, or are caught coming, you'll get a d—hiding."

After they had left, and again when Forester came in the evening, they talked the matter over, and determined, as there was nothing to do but to obey, to cast lots as to who should go, and to take it week about. A'Bear drew the lot, and on the following morning, directly the servant came, got up, and with a heavy heart dressed himself as quickly as he could, and went over to the room to which he had been directed. As soon as he came in, Todd, who was on the watch, called him to the bedside, and said—

"What's your name? d— you."

"A'Bear," he answered.

"What the devil is the meaning of the A?"

Reginald said that he did not know, but that it had always been the name of his family.

The brute—for you could call him nothing else—as he lay in his bed, asked him many more questions of one sort or another, until at length one of the others holloed out—

"Let him go, Toad, or he'll never get his work done."

So he went down to fill the bath belonging to the room. It was a large bath, with a tap which flowed when it was pushed in. Reggie found it very hard work, as the spring was stiff, and he had not made much progress when the boy who had spoken to his persecutor came down, and said—

"I expected what the matter was, I found the same difficulty myself at first. Look here; put your foot against it; or you had better bring a piece of string to-morrow

morning, and then you can tie it up to run of itself. Never mind this morning, I'll do it, and you had better run upstairs quick, or the Toad will be at you."

Reggie did as he was told, and set to work to clean the four coats and trousers, which were very dirty. He had not finished them when the time came for him to be off, and fortunately for him, those left unbrushed belonged to the boy who had just spoken to him, who was head of the room.

"I should give him a good hiding if I were you," said the bully.

"I shall do no such thing," he answered, "as it is all your fault. And now make haste back," he said to Reginald, "and you can brush them to-morrow morning."

Reggie took his cap, only too thankful to be off, but as he was going out of the door, the Toad waited for him, and hit him a blow just in the nape of the neck, that almost stunned him for the moment, as he fell to the

ground, while he felt as though his neck was dislocated.

"You brute, Toad," exclaimed the other, as he lifted the boy up; "if you will be such a beast of a bully, I won't allow any one to come here at all."

Poor Reggie, as he went back, felt that his heart was bursting; the iron had entered into his soul, and the faces of the other two boys looked very long as he told them what he had undergone.

"However, neither of them ever had to go, for the officer, whose quarters he had to pass, saw Reginald go by one morning, and calling up the head corporal of the 5th division after breakfast, told him that he was to prevent any of the cadets in his division from going over to the 1st or 2nd for the purposes of fagging.

Of course the Toad was furious, and vowed vengeance! and one evening, as the 5th division was coming back from the gymnasium,

he waylaid Reggie, and making him stand still, turned round, and deliberately kicked him violently with the heel of his boot ; and then, as the poor boy with some difficulty limped away, chuckled with fiendish laughter—the mark of that kick Reginald will carry with him to his dying day. One great pleasure of his in the football season, though he carefully avoided any place where he might get hurt himself, was to watch for unsuspecting young cadets, and push them violently to the ground ; and another in which he took especial delight was to call some of them up to him when he was sitting at his ease outside the library on Sunday afternoons, and make them sing, after asking them every insulting question that a brutal and depraved nature could imagine or give utterance to.

The head of his room, who had taken the boy's part, and hated the bullying system which then prevailed to such a frightful extent, was not sorry that the matutinal

visits had ceased and when a corporal of the fifth division next term did his best to prevent them.

Of those two lads, one is now a highly esteemed officer in the Engineers, and the other was cashiered in the third year after he obtained his commission—and as his one-time victim read of it in the papers a momentary thrill of joy, of which he was as quickly ashamed and sorry for, passed through his mind.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER this, they managed to get through the term without any greater amount of bullying than fell to the lot of most of the other members of their batch of young cadets, and generally contrived to go out for a good walk on Saturdays and Sundays, especially after O'Connor proposed that they should try and get out the back way. This they accomplished successfully, and found it such a pleasant method of exit, avoiding thereby the many enemies lying in wait for them, that as often as they dared, and saw the coast was clear, they followed the same route.

Reginald, too, as he found himself taking greater interest in his work, and looking for-

ward to the improvement of his position at the end of the term, began to think that, taking everything into consideration, it was not such a bad thing to be a cadet, and as the term drew towards the close, considered that after all there was only a year more to wait before the glories of old cadetship would commence. Besides which, he was beginning to grow somewhat case-hardened and callous, and gradually to adopt the habits and maxims of his companions. At first, he could not listen without pain to the common talk which went on all around him ; but by degrees such feelings wore away, until almost insensibly he found himself joining in the laugh and talk himself, and not only so, but even taking pleasure in it. This state of mind was not arrived at without an occasional qualm of conscience, and some pretty sharp stabs it gave him, too ; but he tried to quiet them with the reflection that everything was against him, and that even Edric would not have been able to persevere in such a place. He

still continued to say his prayers, but before the end of the term it was rather from habit, than any better motive—alas! the fresh springs of his young life were poisoned.

Two circumstances, however, somewhat delayed the demoralizing process, as they gave the boy a certain amount of confidence in himself, which he much needed. One was the feeling that he was quite equal in attainments, and rather superior in ability to the mass of the cadets in his class; and the other was “the races” which occurred in the middle of the term, and in which, owing to the free and active life he had always led, he took a good position.

Early in the term, some of the old cadets had come round for the subscriptions, five shillings each, besides an entrance fee for each race. When the training commenced it was soon seen that the prizes for which their division would be able to contend would be divided most likely among a select number of

some four or five, one of whom was Reginald. O'Connor, though a fair runner, had little or no chance for a prize, but continued training and intended running for the fun of it, as he said. Moreover, he had a pretty strong consolation in the prize which he had won in the swimming races, when he was *facile princeps*, no one in the batch having been able to come near him.

Sloane, the corporal, who lived in the next room to them, although very strict in seeing that his clothes were well brushed, and his room kept in good order, was a very good fellow at bottom; and being fond of athletics himself, his especial forte being jumping, took a good deal of interest in A'Bear's training, and used to go on to the parade ground and give him advice, and see that he was not treated unfairly.

The evening before the athletic sports came off, Sloane called the two boys and another from the adjoining room into his,

and said that if they acted according to his advice, A'Bear would have a very good chance of winning the races.

"You know," he said, "you two fellows have not the least chance of a prize; but what you must do is to force the running from the very beginning. The only one A'Bear has to fear is Ridley, but if you can wind him our man is sure to win, besides I have a lot of bets about him. Ridley will most likely win the 100 yards, as he is quicker than you are for that distance, but press him hard. I should think that you are almost sure of the quarter-of-a-mile, if only you will do as I tell you; and you have a fair chance for the hurdle race, although the distance isn't much—you are the better jumper. It is just possible that some unfair play may be attempted, but I'll prevent it if I can."

They promised to act according to his advice, and O'Connor took every opportunity during the next few hours of taking all the

bets against his friend's success that were offered him.

The following day could not have been more favourable for "the athletics" if it had been selected for the purpose. Misty in the morning, but bright and clear as the time for the races drew near, when the parade ground and green began to be gay with the *élite* of Woolhurst and the neighbourhood; many friends and relatives too of the young athletes had come down from London, and the boys—embryo cadets—from the neighbouring schools, mustered strongly; while the common, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Academy, was also thronged with spectators.

As Reginald drew on his flannel trousers and jersey, and put his hair in the net which he used when learning to swim, he felt a little nervous, which, however, soon wore off under the excitement of witnessing the first race. Immediately afterwards came "the hundred yards" in which he was engaged.

About twenty started, Reginald being nearly in the centre, and Ridley almost to the right of the line. It was an anxious moment; at last they were off, and when about half way, each one doing all he knew, suddenly one of the runners, by name Downes, whom Reginald knew very little, as he was one of the few of the batch who were in the 4th division, cannoned violently against him, knocked him out of his stride, and almost brought him to the ground. He recovered himself, however, but after running a few yards, seeing that he had lost all chance of winning the race, stopped and walked in. Directly the race was over, Sloane, who had seen the whole affair, came up, and, collaring Downes, said to him—

“What do you mean, sir, by trying to knock A’Bear down in that way?”

The boy said—“That it was an accident; that he could not help it as there was such a squash just then, and that he had been nearly knocked over himself.”

"Now, you know that it's all a lie," Sloane answered, "it was a regular plant from the beginning. I saw you try unsuccessfully directly after the start; anyway, I shall go and object to the race," and he let him go.

By this time some others had joined the group, among whom was Todd, who said—

"What's the use of kicking up a row, Sloane, just because the young fool lost. A'Bear never had a chance from the commencement—anybody could see it was an accident; several fellows, who were standing by me, say the same."

"Well, I shall object all the same," he replied, as he turned away, "and if there's any unfair treatment in the other races, I'll have the matter thoroughly sifted to the bottom."

After this followed putting the cannon-ball, and then came the high jump, for which Sloane was entered. It was considered a certainty for him, and so it proved. At 5ft. 4in. there were only two left, and as each

of them cleared it, it was curious to observe the involuntary holding of the breath, and tension of the muscles of the legs of the spectators, as though they were one and all engaged in a course of mental jumping, thus showing the influence of mind over matter. At 5ft. 5in. his competitor failed, when Sloane went to the stand, and had it arranged so that when standing under it the bar just cleared his head, and then, going back a few yards, cleared it gracefully, and with apparent ease, the right leg being well tucked up under him, and the left almost parallel to the bar. As may be supposed this piece of somewhat sensational jumping was followed by immense applause.

After another flat race, and the hurdle race for the seniors, came that for the juniors. Not many had entered, and Ridley and A'Bear started side by side, and kept well together; what Ridley gained in the running, A'Bear made up at the hurdles,

which were in pairs well topped with furze, and, as they cleared the last flight but one, Ridley touched the ground about half a yard in front, when Reginald put on a spurt, caught him up, and, as they came to the last pair, there was not a pin to choose between them; but, unfortunately for him in his anxiety, Ridley took off too soon, and had to take an extra step between the two hurdles, and so lost the race by a head.

Then came cutting bars of lead with a cutlass, and the best swordsman among the cadets displayed his prowess by laying a silk handkerchief on the edge of a rapier, and then, by a rapid movement through the air, cut No. 6, severing it in twain; this he did several times with the fragments amid the continued applause of the spectators. Then followed throwing the cricket ball; afterwards the long jump, which Sloane won with a splendid leap of 19ft. 4in.; the next to him being 18ft. 6in. Next was the mile, which

was run in 4 min. and 45 sec.; and last of all, except the consolation stakes, came the junior's quarter-of-a-mile.

Eight started, amongst whom was Ridley, A'Bear, O'Connor, his friend of the previous evening, and Downes, whose orders with regard to A'Bear had been countermanded much to his satisfaction, for fear of an *exposé*.

There was but little necessity for O'Connor to make the running, as Ridley went off at the top of his speed, evidently intending to get the start and keep it to the end; closely followed by the rest, A'Bear being last. After they had gone some little way, Todd, who happened to be standing near Sloane, said—

“I'll bet you three to one in half-crowns against A'Bear's winning.”

“Done,” he answered, chuckling to himself at the same time in a peculiar way that he had.

“I'll double it, if you like,” he added.

a few minutes afterwards. Todd, however, pretended not to hear, as it was evident that A'Bear's chance of winning was bettering every moment. Only three were now left in the race, the great pace at which they had started having soon knocked the rest up.

When they had only about fifty yards more to go, Ridley was still a few yards in front, labouring heavily, and almost spent, while his opponent had still some run left in him, and was gaining at every stride. Some yards to the rear, Downes, according to his nature, was doggedly and perseveringly lumbering along with the intention of coming in for the third prize. When they were still about twenty yards from the goal, and it was apparently a toss up as to which would be the winner, whilst the excitement and yelling were becoming more and more intense every moment, and the two boys, amid deafening shouts of—"Go it Ridley"—"Go it A'Bear"—were making their final effort; Ridley, who had been running with

the greatest gameness, suddenly dropped down dead beat, and was lifted up in a half-fainting state. Whether he had tripped over a stone, or whatever else might be the reason, he could not tell; all he could say for certain was that his legs had suddenly seemed to give way beneath him. The consequence of this fall was that his rival trotted in the winner, the time two seconds under the minute; while Downes, much to his surprise, came in second.

"Well done, young-un," said Sloane, as he slapped his *protégé* on the back, "I knew you would win, and we won't say anything about the hundred yards; Ridley well deserves the prize."

That evening, whilst the boys were having their tea, examining the prizes—a telescope and a pair of skates—and discussing the various events of the day, O'Connor suddenly exclaimed, "I tell you what it is, I propose that we celebrate the event by having a thorough good tea—a regular blow out;

Saturday night will be the best time, as Forester is not going to London ; and we'll ask old Ridley in ; and I vote for a goose and apple sauce, as we were minus on Michaelmas day ; and we'll eat the health of good Queen Bess for the happy thought."

"Quite agreeable," answered Reginald A'Bear, laughing ; " but where's the goose to come from ? we can't expect one to fly in at the window, and half-a-crown is the exact amount of my worldly goods at the present moment."

"I am going to provide the goose," he replied with pretended haughtiness, and pulling out a book commenced adding up, "I stand to win exactly eighteen shillings, thanks to you, which will more than pay for the goose ; besides which," he added, bringing a half-sovereign out of his pocket with a somewhat theatrical air, and contemplating it with much satisfaction as he placed it on the table, "Charlie's in luck for once, and that will do for the potatoes, apple sauce, mustard, and etceteras."

"Ten shillings at this period of the term! You are in luck and no mistake," ejaculated Forester.

"It has cost me more than thirty to win, though," he observed with an assumed rueful expression of countenance as he put it into his pocket again.

"How so?" they inquired.

"Well, there's not any mystery about it. One of the Toad lot came up to me this afternoon and said, 'I say, O'Connor, I'll give you ten shillings, money down, for your chance of those studs.' Of course, I knew well enough that I had won them; but as a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and I never expected to see the studs, I was thankful enough to pocket the ten shillings."

"But I don't exactly see now how you can make out that it cost you thirty shillings," debated Forester, "as the raffle was only two shillings each."

"Perhaps not, but I'll be bound the brutes have got a good thirty shillings out of me

with their detestable raffles since the beginning of term; it is the second time already, to my certain knowledge, that those studs have been round, and I'll answer for it they'll live to fight another day."

One very (rightly named by O'Connor) detestable, but, most remunerative practice of the Toad and old cadets of his set was to get up raffles, in which they made the unfortunate victims of their tyranny to take shares and fleeced them of their money; then to force the winners to sell back the articles; and when the proceeds of the former raffle had been exhausted on old cadetish luxuries and practices, to go through the same routine again; and so it was that, according to O'Connor's prophecy, the studs came round again before the conclusion of the term.

The end of the conversation was that O'Connor's proposal was adopted, much to the satisfaction of that young gentleman.

About the same hour as this conversation was taking place in the fifth divi-

sion, Todd and Co. were holding a council in the first.

"I tell you what it is," said one who had lost considerably during the afternoon by following Todd's lead with reference to many of the races, "That donkey Sloane and those other fifth division corporals are spoiling that last batch of young cadets."

"One might pretty nearly as well be a young cadet as an old one now, if things are to go on much longer in this fashion," put in another, being the one who had paid O'Connor the ten shillings.

"D—— it, yes," ejaculated Todd, "I should just like to have that cool young beggar A'Bear under my thumb for just about a month; I'd soon lick the young cub into shape; I think he is just about the cheekiest young hound that I ever came across."

"What a grand whipper-in the Toad would make, wouldn't he," laughed the first speaker.

But the other only answered with a whistle.

Now there are whistles and whistles. Some mean nothing, others are of a soothing and soporific character, and others, like Uncle Toby's "lullibullero," mean a great deal. This was one of the latter class ; it commenced *forte* at F, and having been prolonged through the scale died away *pianissimo* just an octave lower ; and said as plainly as possible, "I should not like to be the hound."

The next day, as they were entering the class room, Downes put a note into Reginald's hand containing an apology for his conduct and asking him to make it up, saying that he had run against him much against his own will, but that "it was all that blackguard Toad, who had made him promise to try and upset him."

Reginald, who did not bear the least malice, when he had read it looked up from the desk and gave him a pleasant nod and a smile ; and as they left the room waited to shake hands with him, assuring him that he had

guessed the history of the affair from what Sloane had told him on the previous evening.

When the Saturday evening arrived, the three friends and Ridley made a very light dinner, and then went out for a long walk into the country to get ready for the goose, a fine one, which the servant had procured and was to be cooked for them in the kitchen.

It was a coldish day, and by the time they reached the Academy again, had it been the "uncoteugh" eagle mentioned by Hugh Miller in his "Schools and Schoolmasters," which the old woman was deceived into mistaking for a goose, they would have made an attempt at masticating it; but there was no mistaking the savoury odour which made the hungry lads more hungry still—it was a real goose, and a very fat one.

As O'Connor had provided the feast he was by acclamation, much against his will, voted to the post of carver; and after many

frantic efforts, divers ejaculations, and much dashing of the gravy in various directions over the cloth, managed to dislocate a limb, and then laying down the knife and fork exclaimed, "if that ain't the old father of the flock, I'm a Dutchman."

"Never say die," said Reginald A'Bear, patting his panting friend on the back; "at him again, Charlie, he's got no friends; were he the great grandfather of the flock we are bound to eat him. You know a goose is too much for two, but not enough for three; and as there are four of us, we must leave nothing but the bare bones."

Thus exhorted, the carver set to work again, and after going through the same frantic performance, and getting very red in the face with his exertions, managed to divide the bird into most improper vulgar fractions, which, however, speedily disappeared with their due proportions of bread, potatoes, and apple sauce.

"Father of the flock or no," affirmed the winner of the quarter of a mile, shortly after commencing operations, "one thing is quite certain, that it is no end of a good goose."

"First chop! according to the Chinese," was the verdict sententiously pronounced by Ridley, who was a bit of a gourmand, and busily engaged at the moment in making amends for the enforced abstinence of the last few weeks of training by manufacturing a mouthful at the end of his fork—first a slice of goose, then a little salt and mustard, then a little stuffing, and the whole topped up with apple sauce; while Forester's silence spoke volumes of consent.

For some little time afterwards, not much was heard save the clatter of knives and forks; and then, when the first help had been got through, the provider of the feast laid down his knife and fork; and, as he rested for a moment preparatory to making a fresh onslaught on the remnants of the animal

before him, thus commenced, "According to promise I have a toast to propose, and

"Here's to the health of good Queen Bess,
Who reviewed the troops down at Sheerness."

"That I am sure she didn't," broke in Ridley.

"Of course, I know that well enough; but you must have a rhyme to Bess, and one place is as good as another. You should never interrupt a poet when engaged in composition, and you have driven all the ideas out of my head; but I will be generous for once: here's an offer"—and he held up a fragment of the skeleton of the goose in front of him—"whoever will compose a poem in honour of the occasion shall have the merry-thought of a goose as a reward?"

"Rather a suggestive offer of the generous individual?" remarked Forester, winking at the others.

At this sally there was a general laugh, in which O'Connor joined as heartily as the rest. Before he had helped them all a second time,

which was rather a lengthy operation, Reginald had claimed the reward with the following doggerel verse, which he said was strictly historical and geographical, but required two of the words to be pronounced Devonshire fashion. It was as follows—

“ Here’s to the health of good queen Bess,
Whose ships from Kent unto Caithness
Harassed the Spanish Armada.
When they brought her the neuse
She was dining off geuse
So named it the dish for Michaelmas day.”

“ Bravo, Reggie!” said the carver, as he passed over the merry-thought.

With much fun and merriment the feast continued, doubtless a happy thing for the digestion, for in less than an hour from its commencement, the whole of the edible portion of the goose had disappeared into private life, although the last few mouthfuls required some considerable efforts in order to despatch them in the same direction as their predecessors. But the thing determined on had been done, the four lads had finished a good fat goose between them, and were

boyishly proud, and boasted to their neighbours of their nasty feat of gluttony.

In little more than another month the end of the term had arrived, and while O'Connor had only just managed to get into the next class, Forester came out at the top of the list *facile princeps*, and Reginald A'Bear, who had gained ten places, was only four below him, so it was with a glad heart that he said his first farewell to the Academy, and turned his steps towards Devonshire. The cause of this success which had rather astonished him, had been in great measure owing to his proficiency in Euclid, for which very high marks were given, he being the only one in the class who had worked out all the problems. One of them was to "trisect a right angle." Now the ordinary way is to describe an equilateral triangle on one side, and then to bisect the angle of the triangle enclosed within the right angle; but Reginald had never been shown the proper method, so after puzzling his brains for some time, and

almost giving it up in despair, suddenly, just about ten minutes before the time for giving in the papers, a bright thought struck him which almost made him give utterance to an involuntary "hurrah." He hastily seized his compasses, drew an arc of a circle, with its centre at the angle of the right angle, and another with the same radius, but its centre the point where the circle had cut one of the sides, and then drawing a line from the apex of the right angle to the point of section of the two circles, and bisecting the larger angle thus formed, he wrote the Q.E.F. much to his own satisfaction and delight. When the examination was over the senior master of the class called him up, and after showing him the more correct way, said that he should nevertheless give him full marks for it, as it had shown considerable ingenuity.

His uncle's house at Bath was his resting place that night, and though his cousins tried very hard, they could not persuade him to stay more than one day with them—he was so

anxious to reach home—and when he alighted from off the coach at the King's Arms, at Kingsbridge, there was Mr. Maitland, Edric, who had come home two days before, and Lorna waiting to greet him. The luggage was quickly transferred to the fly, and they were soon on the way to Burrscombe.

They were a happy party that evening, and while the three elders chatted on one side of the fire, the two boys with Lorna on a little chair beside them, formed a group on the other, and on the mat between them were Cadmus, and poor old Don, now almost on his last legs.

What they had done in the half, what they were going to do during the holidays (or vacation as Reginald called it), the questions of the examinations, the masters, the drilling, the athletics, school friendships, football, Silvertail, old Jabez Stear, were all discussed in their turn, and indeed formed a never-ending topic of conversation during the ensuing six weeks. Lorna was, if possible,

the happiest of the three, and as she sat drinking in every word, said little, but thought the more, and there and then came to the conclusion that there could not be two other such boys in the world; and, as they were returning to the vicarage, the little girl told her mother that she had never felt so happy in her life, and that it was almost worth while that they should go away, so that she could have the pleasure of welcoming them home again.

That night, when the excitement of the day was over, by the side of the fire which Nanny, as loving and careful as ever, had prepared for him, Reggie sat for some time thinking, and when he knelt beside his bed in the old place, he offered up his petitions to God in a very different frame of mind to what he had said his prayers for many a long day, and as he got into bed, said to himself with a sigh—

“Ah, it would be easy enough to persevere here.”

The six weeks, which were a time of almost unalloyed happiness to the two boys, except for the knowledge that they were passing away all too quickly, came at length to an end; and the farewells had to be said, which seemed much more disagreeable than they did six months before; and when the coach drove off, Reginald, as he saw the big tears in Lorna's eyes, felt a disagreeable sensation about the larynx, which he had some difficulty in overcoming; however, he gulped it down, but did not dare to turn round, and tried to look bravely into the future.

CHAPTER XII.

It is said to be a custom of the Arabs, when their horses have arrived at a certain age, to try their constitutions in the following manner. Up to that time the greatest care has been taken of them, but now they are mounted, and away across the desert each Arab urges his horse at the top of his speed, and then plunges him, covered with foam, perspiring violently from every pore, quivering in every limb, and almost mad with excitement, into some pool, cold with the water of the mountains. Many die, or have afterwards to be destroyed, but, doubtless, those which have stood this crucial test prove thereby the strength of their constitutions:

yet, how many good, useful, and noble animals must be thus destroyed.

Now, this is much about the way that a boy in the middle and upper class is treated in England. Up to a certain age the greatest care is taken of him, too much very often; he is looked after at home and abroad; shielded from the faintest breath of contamination; prevented from undergoing the smallest amount of hardship; not even allowed to think for himself; and very frequently spoilt by all the female part of the household, mother, maids, sisters, aunts, and grandmother, when she can get the chance; and though the father growls away sometimes, and says the women are spoiling the boy, yet he takes no steps himself to lay the foundation of character, saying that school will, at any rate, knock the nonsense out of him. And then all of a sudden the boy is plunged into what is too often the contamination and tyranny of a school life, while the father thinks to himself, with a sort of mental shrug of the

shoulders, that, as he somehow or other managed to get through and survive it, his son will do the same. But how many good and noble lives are spoilt, how many lads, who might have turned out useful members of society, are ruined in the process?

It was late in the afternoon of the following day that Reginald was standing on the platform of the London Bridge station, waiting for the next train for Woolhurst, and feeling somewhat disconsolate and miserable, as it was a cold bleak day in the last week in January, and the space in front of the station was beginning to get white with the snow which was falling fast, and, driven by the north-east wind, stray flakes were even finding their way through the archways and passages, and constantly opening doors, into the very station itself. There was a bright fire in the waiting room, but, seeing some old cadets within, he had thought discretion the better part of valour, and had kept outside; and, as he was trying, without much success,

to keep himself warm, he felt a slap on the back, and, looking round, was met with "A penny for your thoughts, old fellow—what's up? Why you look for all the world like patience on a monument," and there was O'Connor, got up, regardless of expense, in the last new things in coats and trousers.

After a hearty shake of the hands, O'Connor proposed that they should get out of the cold into the refreshment room, and have a glass of bitter and a biscuit before the train started. This he agreed to, and, as they were discussing them, and comparing notes, they found that they were both in the fourth division, and, strange to say, were to be companions again.

"Well, that is luck," said O'Connor.

"Yes, won't it be jolly if we only have a good head of a room. I wonder who it will be?" answered Reggie.

"We shall soon know, at any rate. I don't mind so much, so that it's not the Toad, or one of that lot."

And then the bell rang, and, rushing out, they just jumped into the carriage as the train started. As it was leaving the platform they were intensely delighted to see Todd and two others come rushing along, and trying to pass the barrier; but the porter was inexorable.

“Piece of luck, number two,” chuckled Master Charley, with a grin.

When they arrived at Woolhurst Station, while O'Connor went to look after a fly, Reginald attended to the luggage, and it was not long before they were in their new quarters, and found the third young cadet in their room, by name Benson, who had come by an earlier train, engaged in unpacking his things. From him they learnt that the head of their room was Rufford, a cadet who was entering on his sixth term, and one of the oldest in the Academy, as he had not come up until he was past fifteen.

“I wonder what sort of fellow he is,” said

A'Bear; "I never came across him at all last term, that I remember."

"A badish egg, I reckon, as people say about us at home. I was at school with him for a year on the Common, and all I know is that he was not at all liked, and never made any friends, and we were all glad when he left. 'The reason why, I cannot tell, but I do not like thee Dr. Fell,'" concluded O'Connor, with a wise shake of the head.

About an hour afterwards the great man arrived—a pretty tall and strong made fellow with an apparently free and open countenance, but it was far from being a pleasing one, and there was a disagreeable expression about it which you noticed at the second look. At the present moment, however, he was in excellent humour with himself and the world in general, and, after asking their names, and chatting away pleasantly enough with the boys for a bit, gave them some orders, and then went for a brief tour among old friends.

"I think he seems a very jolly fellow," said A'Bear.

"Don't whistle 'till you're out of the wood ; wait 'till he's got his uniform on," answered O'Connor, from the depths of his port-manteau.

His words proved only too true, for the very next morning they had the first touch of his quality. Reginald, as his custom was after he was dressed, knelt down to say his prayers. On the previous evening Rufford had been in the opposite room, so had not noticed him, but now he holloaed out—"None of that d—— cant." And then, as the boy did not move, he took his belt, and, hitting him a severe blow with the buckle, said—"None of this —— cant, sir, get up."

"Please, Rufford, mayn't I say my prayers?" exclaimed the poor boy, as he writhed beneath the blow.

"I don't want to prevent you saying your prayers—you can say them in bed if you like,

but I hate any fellow setting himself up to be better than any one else."

Now, doubtless, what Reginald ought to have done was to have persevered in spite of persecution, as a good soldier of the Cross, and to have conquered, as others had done before him, under similar circumstances, by the patience of Christian fortitude; but the truth has to be told.

Both Benson and O'Connor advised him to submit; the latter telling him that, when his brother had been at the Academy, a boy, who had persisted, had been kicked out into the passage, and, when he still continued to pray, cold water had been thrown over him, and in the end he had been obliged to give in; and, as it must be the same with him at last, he had much better submit at once with a good grace.

"Besides which," added Benson, "you have no right to make us suffer, too, as you certainly will if you are obstinate—for you'll only raise the devil in him, and make him worse than he is now."

And so it was, that, contrary to his own better judgment, when the evening came, for the first time since the day that he had first knelt by his dead mother's knee in the old nursery at Bearcroft, he went to bed without having first prayed to God—and, as he marked the coward act, his guardian angel hid his face and wept.

The sequel may soon be told—by this act of moral cowardice, having lowered himself in his own eyes, though for a time he continued to say his prayers in bed, before very long he had ceased to pray altogether.

On the same day, before morning parade, after giving his orders to O'Connor, who was the "*doulos*" for the week, Rufford stopped for a moment and said—

"Look here, you fellows; do what I tell you, and then we shan't quarrel; but if you are cool, and forget, or don't do what you are told, why look out for squalls. I know you were pretty well spoiled last term by Sloane, but you won't get much of that here, I can

tell you ; my motto is, '*Seniores priores, juniores ad labores,*' and so you'll have to find."

As he left the room, the wit of the party put his hand to his mouth and whispered—

"Well, all I can say is, that its 'age before honesty.'"

After this, things went on smoothly for some time ; there was one thing in their favour, that he did not allow any one else to fag or bully them, and so they were in great hopes that as they were very careful to carry out all his commands to the letter, the term would pass by pretty comfortably.

It was the duty of each boy during his week of duty, to awake the great man punctually at five, and then he remained in bed and studied until the "reveille" sounded, and it was time to get up ; and immediately the servant came, a cup of cocoa had to be made for him with boiled milk, of which, however, all had the benefit.

But by degrees the alarum ceased, as is the

nature of alarums, to awaken the sleepers, and an occasional hiding was the consequence; but at last, Rufford—who was of a somewhat inventive turn of mind—hit upon the following plan and as Benson slept immediately under the clock, he got the full benefit of the invention; for balancing one of the pewter basins on the top of the bed, he fastened it by a cord to the weight of the alarum, and as regularly as the clock struck five, unless he had moved it previously, down came the basin clattering on his legs, and roused him most effectually. And so about a third of the term had slipped away, and the boys were beginning to think that their lot, as far as the second term was concerned, had fallen in rather pleasant quarters, when, all of a sudden, the storm arose, although it had been brewing for some time, if they had only observed more carefully the signs of its approach.

It commenced as follows: shortly after the beginning of term, cards were introduced by Rufford, “Vingtune” being the favourite

game, and when the officer had gone the rounds, and the doors were locked for the night, they played alternately in the different rooms of its supporters, just half those in the division.

Rufford had wished to force those who were disinclined to play, but he had been overruled by the others, who had determined that none need to join except by their own free will. This was a great boon to the three boys, as they never played except when it was the turn of their room to receive the gamblers, and A'Bear not even then.

The fact of his never playing had not been unnoticed by Rufford, nor was the scene about the prayers forgotten, and his bottled wrath was ready to burst out when the occasion should present itself.

Nothing will cause a feeling of hatred to spring up more quickly in the heart of one man against another than the knowledge that the man he is about to hate is better than himself. It is the natural repugnance of

what is evil to what is good. And so it was in this instance. He felt instinctively that the boy was better than himself, and hated him accordingly. This feeling was intensified one day by the following circumstance :—

It was shortly after dinner one Saturday afternoon, and A'Bear happened to be the only one in the room, engaged in writing a letter to Sandstone, when Rufford came in.

“ Ah, you are the very man I was looking for,” he said ; “ I want you to take a message for me into the town, as I know you have a pass to-day.”

When Reginald heard the message, he did not answer at once, being so thoroughly taken by surprise that he knew not what to say ; so Rufford repeated it, and added—

“ Do you understand me, sir, I say ?”

“ Oh, please Rufford,” he answered, “ I had rather not.”

“ Then you refuse to go ?” he said.

“ Oh, please excuse me, I couldn't go.”

“ Ah, I understand it all ; I have seen it

coming to this for some time. You mean you won't," the bully blurted out with an oath.

For a moment the boy felt inclined to give in, but the letter he was writing to Lorna seemed to strengthen him, and he said, quietly—

"Oh no, it is not that, but I really can't."

Now, had Rufford there and then given him a good thrashing, which he fully expected, he would not have minded; but, instead of this, he said, almost hissing out each word through his teeth—

"You refuse to do what I tell you! Well, we shall see who's master this evening," and as he left the room he hated the boy, and the concentrated venom of such a nature was not to be lightly despised by one whom he had so completely in his power. But, somehow or other, although he dreaded the future, Reginald felt light-hearted and almost happy as he finished his letter—his guardian angel was ministering unto him.

When he told O'Connor, who came in a few

minutes later, what had taken place, that lively youth's usually merry face grew very long indeed ; and he said—

“ You have been and gone and done it now, and no mistake. Of course you did right, but I wish he had asked me, and then I should have gone, and it would have saved us no end of trouble. I would not be in your shoes for something.”

“ Oh, no, Charlie, I am sure you wouldn't.”

“ Oh, but I should,” he answered ; “ I shan't try to make myself out a bit better than I am. You know I was never brought up on all those fine principles of moral courage as you were—anything for a quiet life, I say ; and a pretty kettle of fish you've put on to boil, and no mistake ; won't Benson be in a pretty stew when he comes in !”

Shortly afterwards they started on their walk, determined, according to O'Connor's advice, to try and forget their coming troubles, and to have a good rout out in the dockyard ;

for, as he said, "it was of no use to cry over spilt milk."

When the evening came, tea being over, and the things cleared away, Rufford went out, and returned shortly afterwards with two others, to whom he had explained the nature of his charge against A'Bear, viz., "that he was a d— cool young beggar, and had refused to take a message for him into the town."

They were not bad-hearted boys, but great believers in the traditional rights of old cadets; and without staying to enquire into the nature of the message, this self-constituted jury had declared that such coolness must be put a stop to at once, and had come to witness the well-merited chastisement, as they considered it, about to be inflicted on the *cool* one.

The first thing Rufford did, was to order Benson to fetch him a towel, which he carefully and tightly rolled up, beginning at one corner, tied it round the middle with a piece of string, dipped one end into water, wrapped the other

round the forefinger of his right hand, and then, turning to A'Bear, who had watched with anything but pleasurable feelings the gradual formation of this instrument of torture, said—

“Now then, sir, make an angle of 45° against the cupboard.”

As there was nothing for it but submission, he did as he was told, and fixing his teeth firmly together, determined to bear what was coming as he best could, when the brute, drawing the towel through his left hand, filliped it with all his might against him.

The agony caused by the stroke was so great (as he said afterwards, it felt as though a large piece of flesh had been suddenly torn from his body) that, although the boy managed to prevent a scream, he writhed about the room with the intense pain.

“None of that d— nonsense,” his persecutor said, “down again,” and the same scene was gone through a second and a third time. But the third fillip was so well directed—

practice having made the operator more perfect—that his victim could not prevent an involuntary scream, and jumping into the air, he then fell on his knees, and afterwards on to the ground in an agony of pain.

Rufford was about to renew the punishment upon him, when one of the others interposed, saying that he thought “he had had enough for the present.”

“Very well, then ; here !” he said, tossing the towel to Benson, “put this into my cupboard. You see what you fellows may expect if you don’t do as I tell you ;” and turning on his heel, walked away to the library, with the intention of trying to deaden the pricks of conscience by narrating to those who might be there, the disagreeable *duty* he had just been obliged to perform ; and as Benson put the towel into the cupboard, he said—

“I told you what the consequence would be ; you’ve raised the devil in him, and no mistake, and it won’t be laid in a hurry, either ;” while O’Connor seized the poker,

and shook it after them, declaring what he would like to do to them if only he had the opportunity—and the opportunity did come, but many years afterwards.

In a short time, many of the other young cadets in the division, Forester among them, had come into the room, and commiserated the unfortunate victim of tyranny and brutality; while the terms “brute,” “bully,” “shame,” “leg,” and other adjectives and substantives of a similar character were pretty freely used with reference to the matter.

Reginald had endured the torture like a lad of spirit, but the sympathy and kindness of the boys made him break down, and he laid his head on the table, while a few great sobs came from his heaving chest. After a time they retired to their own rooms again, for fear lest Rufford should return and find them. Forester stayed to the last, and just before he left, stooped down and whispered in his ear—

“I am so glad that you refused. I hope that you will have courage to persevere.”

Those words in season, like, as Solomon calls them, "apples of gold in baskets of silver," acted just in the same way as a cordial to the body, and in a few minutes he was himself again. That night, however, he felt very miserable indeed, and it was long before he could get to sleep; for his thoughts wandered back to the time when his father and mother were alive, and he was happy at Bearcroft, and he wondered why all these troubles should have come upon him since; and then he pictured to himself the scene of the shipwreck and his father's dead body; and then the pleasant walks with Edric and Lorna, and when he fell to sleep at last, in the small hours of the morning, his eyes were wet with tears.

After morning service, Forester, who had not gone to London on the previous day, owing to the scarlet fever having broken out in his home, asked A'Bear if he would go for a walk with him that afternoon. To this he gladly consented. It was a dry, keen, day in

March, so they put on their cloaks, and walked up Shooter's Hill into the woods, and going into a secluded part, sat down on a fallen tree, and discussed the event of the previous evening.

"I am so glad you refused to go," Forester said. "I am afraid not many fellows would have had the courage. I hope that I should have, but am very glad it was not me that he asked."

"Oh, there is not much to boast of," Reginald replied, and he told him the scene about the prayers at the beginning of term.

"I suppose you ought to have persevered," he answered, "but I am afraid that I should have acted in the same way under similiar circumstances. How thankful we ought to be that we have Knight for the head of our room ; he never plays cards, or bullies us, and never curses or swears, and sets us a good example himself by praying night and morning. He is just such another as Sloane. I only wish that there were more like him here"—

“Ah,” he added, after a moment’s pause, “if only Sloane knew about it, I believe that he would take the matter up.”

The first principle of a cadet’s, or, indeed, of every school-boy’s code of honour, “not to sneak,” was strongly developed in them both, and the thought of telling him or any one else never entered their heads.

After this, and during the rest of the walk, they exchanged mutual confidences, and while Reginald gave him an outline of his own chequered life, to which his companion listened with great interest, Forester told him in return that he was one of a large family of children, and that his nomination to the Academy had been a matter of great consequence to his father, who was a London physician, and that he was working hard to pass through as quickly as he could, when he hoped to get into the Engineers. They were both very sorry when their walk had come to an end, and mutually felt that this one talk had done more to lay the foundation of a

lasting friendship than the six months that they had lived together in the same room during the previous term.

Before that time next day, however, Sloane knew all about it, for when Rufford on the Saturday evening had been narrating the cause and nature of the punishment he had just inflicted on A'Bear to a circle of admiring friends in the library, Sloane, now senior corporal of the fifth division, had been sitting near, but went on reading and apparently taking no notice, although the bully, seeing him there, had purposely placed himself within hearing distance.

When they had left, he put his book on the shelf, and took a walk round the parade, and the more he thought over it, and considered what he remembered of A'Bear's character, the more sure he felt that there was something in the background that had not been mentioned. So on the Monday, when one of the fifth division cadets, who he knew was a

friend of O'Connor's, as they had come from the same school, was brushing his clothes, he asked him if he knew anything about the matter. Seeing that O'Connor had given his friend a full and particular account of the whole affair that very morning, he was soon satisfied that his suspicions were correct.

To say that his blood fairly boiled as he heard the recital would be no exaggeration, and he exclaimed—"The detestable brute, I always knew that Rufford was a bully, but I did not think he was so bad as this."

Advising the boy not to mention to any one that he had cognizance of what had taken place, he went that same evening to Hill, who happened to be the senior corporal, and asked him to take the matter up, and speak to Rufford on the subject.

When Hill had heard the facts of the case, and that A'Bear was the sufferer, he promised to speak to Rufford on the first opportunity; and, indeed, his conscience rather smote him

that he had never done the least for the boy, except to give him half-a-dozen words of advice nine months before.

"You are quite sure," he said, "that what you have told me is correct?"

"Yes, quite certain," Sloane answered.

"Then I'll speak to him this very day." And so he did.

When Rufford discovered that the whole facts of the case were so widely known—indeed one of the two cadets who had witnessed the chastisement had already declared to him that "had he told him the whole truth nothing should have induced him to be present"—he readily promised not to carry the matter any further : for he was desperately afraid it might reach the ears of the authorities, and then disgrace and expulsion would be certain to follow.

To his astonishment, also, as the affair got noised abroad among the cadets of his own standing, it was almost universally reprobated ; and though hardly any said much to

him about it, yet the meaning of the cold shoulder, which was given to him on more than one occasion with signs of unmistakable contempt, he could not but understand, and which the sympathy that he received from such as Todd made but a poor compensation for. This, of course, did not increase his love for those who were the cause of it; but his fears for a time made him cautious of any renewed experiments in bullying. Before the month was over, however, as his fears wore away, his brutality got the upper hand again, and the three boys being entirely at his mercy he made their lives a burden to them. Three instruments of torture were adopted by him, viz., the towel, the racket-handle, and the belt, and for the slightest offence they were put into frequent requisition; and to describe a right angle with one side resting on the floor, and the other against the cupboard, was an unpleasant problem with the working out of which they were far too well acquainted. Another method of torture in which he took

especial delight, was to make the boys stretch out the fingers of the hand upon the table to their full extent, and then to dart the point of a compass between them with great rapidity. 'Tis true that he was so great an adept at the performance that they generally escaped without a stab; still it was anything but pleasant to those being operated upon.

Against Reginald, of course, his animosity was more particularly directed, especially when he saw that upon his more sensitive nature his tortures had the most effect, until at last they began to have a visible effect upon the boy's health and spirits, and even imperceptibly upon his character. . Indeed, one of the worst features of bullying is that, like slavery which brutalizes both the slave-owner and the slave, bullying has a tendency to lower the moral tone both of the bully and his victim; and so it was in this instance. Reginald began to be often put under arrest or confined to his room, to cease to take any interest in his work and to neglect it, until at

last the senior mathematical master of his class, who was a very kind-hearted man, called him up one day as the class was leaving, and told him that he had noticed a very great falling off in his diligence during the last few weeks, and that unless he put his shoulder to the wheel during the rest of the term, he would certainly never get into the next class.

He promised to try and act differently for the future, but felt that his energy had been almost knocked out of him, and, that unless something should happen he could not alter. Happily for him and his companions in misfortune that something did take place before the end of the week.

On Thursday evening, after the officer on duty had been his rounds, and Rufford had gone down to play cards in the room below, the three boys were sitting quietly reading, when Benson shut his book and said, "I tell you what it is, I have quite made up my mind not to stand it any longer."

"What do you mean?" They both exclaimed in a breath.

Now Benson was a thick set lad, strong and sturdy for his age, one of those quiet sort of individuals who have an immense fund of resolution when once roused; long in making up their minds, but when once made up as firm and immovable as so many granite rocks. There had been much to make him come to this determination. Rufford had been getting more and more brutal in his conduct towards them every day, so that their lives were becoming almost unbearable. That very afternoon he had given them an additional touch of his brutal ingenuity; for the bully had rejoiced in the discovery of a new and peculiar, and to him most deeply interesting method of torture, by which, after the manner of the gladiatorial conflicts in the old Roman amphitheatre, his victims were their own castigators, and which promised to afford him considerable amusement of the kind he delighted in for some time to come.

Having collected as many pairs of Wellington boots and slippers as he could discover, he had divided them into two lots, and giving one half to Benson and the other to O'Connor, and placing them in opposite corners of the room, had ordered them to fight a duel; the weapon of offence being cowhide in the form of the heels of Wellington boots—no very pleasant things from which to receive a knock on the funny bone, or a crack on the side of the head. As may be supposed, they had set to work at first very cautiously, having no desire to wound or be wounded; but after a time as first one and then the other had received a blow they had set to work in earnest, and did not cease until they had bruised one another pretty severely; much as may be supposed to the intense delight and satisfaction of Rufford, and an audience like minded with himself.

Benson, who still smarted in body from the blows which he had received, and still more in spirit; for as he had brooded over the in-

voluntary part which he had played in the gladiatorial combat of the afternoon, his blood fairly boiled again with suppressed passion as he felt ready for anything, which fact was clearly shown in his voice as he declared, that "he had made up his mind." And when in answer to his comrade's question he had made the additional assertion in a strong guttural voice, "Why I won't be bullied by that brute Rufford any more," they knew that he really meant it.

"But, how can you help it?" said A'Bear.

"I don't mind fagging for him, but I shall simply refuse to submit to his brutality. You know he can't do more to one than he does already; to-morrow it will be a triangular duel, and goodness knows, what the day afterwards. I believe that he is such a coward that he'll give in after a bit."

"But," urged O'Connor, "he'll be in such a rage at first that he would not hesitate almost to kill you."

"Not he, he has the bump of caution much

too strongly developed. And I don't see why we three should not go in at him; I have thought about it a good deal lately. Most likely, when he comes up to-night, if he has lost, I shall catch it for something or other as it is my week; and, if then he attempts to strike me, I rush at him, will you help me? He won't be expecting it, and most likely I shall knock him on to the bed, when we shall be able to pin him down."

"But shan't we catch it afterwards; all the old cadets will take his part; and then we shall be worse off than ever."

"Well, we can't be worse off than we are now, and at any rate we shall have the satisfaction of having given the brute one good hiding."

They had got thus far in their consultation, and were beginning to discuss the plan of operations—which was, as should be by incipient engineers and artillerymen, to be conducted on the most scientific principles of battery and assault—when suddenly there was

a great noise in the room underneath, followed by a commotion on the stairs, and immediately afterwards Rufford rushed into the room, impelled more quickly than he intended by a final blow from the head corporal of the division, in whose room they had been playing.

"I put you into arrest," screamed Rufford, as soon as he had reached the safety of his own quarters, taking up a chair, wherewith to defend himself from the other, who was some two inches shorter in height.

"You have no power," laughed Merton, with scorn in every word. "You need not be afraid, I shan't defile the sanctuary of your precious apartment. I tell you what it is. You are a low, mean, cowardly brute, and how I could have gone on playing with you night after night, I can't think. I know how you have treated these fellows for weeks, and I ought to be ashamed of myself for not interfering before—but it's the detestable system here; as sure, however, as you lay a finger

on one of them for the future, you shall smart for it ; or I shall report you, for I couldn't contaminate my hands with you any more."

As soon as he reached his own room again, he took the cards, which were still lying on the table, and threw them into the fire, saying, "As long as I live, I'll never touch a card again ; I have had my lesson, and I shall advise all you fellows to do the same." He kept his word, and the scenes which they had witnessed that evening made a lasting impression on many of those who had witnessed them.

As for Rufford, he was thoroughly cowed, the thirty shillings that he had won, not without suspicion of cheating, being poor compensation for the sense of indignity and disgrace under which he was smarting. To have been thrashed by one smaller than himself was bad enough ; but to have made such an *exposé* of himself before grinning and rejoicing young cadets was worse still.

Of course the whole affair had been "nuts" indeed for the three boys, and the intense pleasure with which they poured out the hot water, and bathed his bleeding nose and swollen eye, grinning and winking at one another in the background, made amends for many a previous hiding. Doubtless they ought, as good Christians, to have been very sorry for him, but such was at any rate contrary to boyish human nature.

Whether Benson, with their assistance, would ever have carried out his proposal, is one of those things not generally known, as there was never any occasion to put their courage to the test, for most marked was the change in the behaviour of the head of their room from that day forward; not so much from fear that Merton would put his threat into execution, as that the punishment which he had received, and consequent humiliation, had in some degree brought him to his senses, and he began to see what a brute he had been to those who had been placed

under his protection, and which trust he had so cruelly betrayed.

As may be supposed, this event and the altered circumstances of their daily lives consequent thereon, made the remaining six weeks or so of the term much more endurable; and the mathematical master had never to find fault again with Reginald for idleness. Indeed, their room, instead of the card-playing, became quite the working-room of the division, as Rufford, who was far from wanting in ability, had redoubled his efforts, hoping to get down to the Arsenal at Midsummer; for he felt that after what had taken place, the sooner he said "goodbye" to the Academy the better. When the end of the term came, he found that though his name was somewhat low down on the list, his wish was accomplished; Sloane, who had carried off several prizes, being at the top of the tree.

In the third class, Forester was again first, having beaten, not only all of his own

batch, but those also who had been left in the class from the previous term ; while A'Bear was eighth, and Benson and O'Connor had to remain behind for another term. As that very lively young man—who was on his way to the Emerald Isle, and elated with a sense of freedom, and anticipation of no end of fun in his Galway home—had been coming the wild Irishman, and affecting a most exaggerated brogue all the way down from London—bade farewell to his friend at the Bristol refreshment room, he said—

“ Mind you write, old fellow ; thank goodness there's only six months more of it.”

CHAPTER XIII.

NEITHER a nation nor an individual can be any length of time under a system of which organized tyranny and oppression form a part, without being in some degree demoralized by it. A certain amount of freedom of thought and action is essentially necessary to a healthy state of moral and intellectual life—and so it was that when Reginald A'Bear reached Burrscombe, he was not the boy that he had been when he had left it for the first time about a year before, either morally or intellectually.

'Tis true that he had made progress in his studies, but the inner intellectual life, the growth of the genius of the boy, had received

a rude check; and the tone of his moral and religious life had also been lowered at a still faster rate. Lorna, child though she was, with the quickness of a woman's instinct observed it almost immediately, without knowing or understanding the reason of the change, and shed some tears in private over that part of it which was shown in neglect of her. Mr. Maitland noticed it also, and being a keen observer of human nature, understood only too well the reason of the deterioration of his character; that what he was afraid would be, had already begun to come to pass. He hoped, however, that the seed sown would not be altogether lost, and that this time of temptation might prove after all but as a season of frost in early spring, which would only check his life's growth for a while, after which it would grow again with fresh vigour. Edric, to whom, of course, Reginald spoke far more freely than to anyone else, was very much grieved at the recital of his friend's wrongs and troubles, and would have

told the whole matter to his father but for the promise of secrecy.

"Oh, Reggie," he said, as they had been talking one day over the events of the half year which had just come to a close, seated in the shade of a rock in their favourite nook, "how I wish you had never gone to Woolhurst."

"So do I sometimes, but I suppose it will all come right in the end; I almost begin to think that O'Connor's plan is the best, to try and take things as they come."

"But that is what I think is the very worst thing of all, it is not so much the dreadful bullying, and all that you have undergone, which troubles me, as that you don't seem to care about all that is taking place around you. I think O'Connor's plan is a very bad one indeed, it is just like that of the people who used to say 'let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

"Well, Eddy, if you were in my place, I believe that even you would cease to think

much about it either. It is just like when I was in London, for the first night or two I could not sleep at all for the noise, but by the end of the week I slept through it all as sound as a top; and so it is at Woolhurst, you see every day so many things that are wrong, that at last you hardly think about them at all, they come to be almost like matters of course."

"Ah, Reggie," Edric answered "that is just the very thing I mean by being 'the worst of it.' You see if a person once begins to look upon the sins of another without a feeling of loathing, or even with indifference, he is on the high road to committing them himself; at least, that is what father said in his sermon on Sunday week, and I feel that it is true."

"I am sure, Eddy, you don't really think that I could ever become such a brute as Rufford, that I could ever prevent another from saying his prayers, or bully him to within an inch of his life."

"No, I am sure that you never would, but in other things you might be induced to follow not him, but others, especially if some of your particular friends, like O'Connor, should lead the way."

"Well, then, I think you have pitched upon the wrong person, many a fellow is much more likely to go wrong than Charlie. You see the very worst of him, and I am sure that he has a good heart at bottom. We have both made up our minds to do all we can to put down bullying as soon as we have any say in the matter. You know we are not all bad; if fellows like Sloane can go through all right, I don't see why we shouldn't too."

Now Edric had not yet learnt when to conclude a discussion once commenced, and was a regular Briton for sticking to an argument, and, without knowing it, was the least little bit jealous of O'Connor's influence over his friend, so he said—"It was O'Connor and Benson who advised you to give in about the prayers, and he would not have minded very

much if you had given in the second time also ; the fact is, you don't seem to see the danger."

"Now, there you are, just like Forester, he is always so desperately afraid that he may go wrong. Now, I think, that it is rather a cowardly way. It seems to me much better to look at the bright side of things, and wait till the temptation comes, and then meet it, and conquer it. If you are afraid to begin with, you are much more likely to be beaten in the end."

"Still, I think, Forester's plan is much the safest. I don't expect that he is really a bit more afraid of falling into temptation than you are, but he knows the danger. Father and I were talking about this very thing in his study only yesterday, and he said that we should always mistrust our own strength. Those who follow Forester's plan will keep out of temptation as much as they can, while those who follow yours will go into the way of it—and as father said yesterday, we have no right to tempt God, and it is absurd to

pray 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' if we don't try ourselves to keep out of the way of temptation."

"It's all very well to give advice," answered Reginald, a little testily, "but I don't see how you are to avoid temptation when it is surrounding you on every side, and you must be in the middle of it. If you were at Woolhurst you would find it much easier to preach than to practice, I can tell you."

"Don't be angry with me, Reggie," said Edric affectionately, "I know it is very hard for you, but you see I am so afraid that you should try to stand in your own strength merely."

Now Reginald was still fonder of his old companion than any of his new friends, and the affectionate tone of voice in which he had just spoken disarmed his momentary feelings of resentment, and he replied—

"No, Eddy, I am not a bit angry with you, and it's only a dear old fellow like you that would take the trouble to give me any

advice at all, and I know I need it very much; but 'it's of no use to cry over spilt milk,' as O'Connor says. Why," added he, jumping up and looking at his watch, "it wants only ten minutes of the time we are to start for Hope, and Lorna will be thinking that we are going to neglect her."

But Edric was not going to be put off so easily, and, when they had gained the top of the cliff, he put his arm within Reginald's and said—

"That is just one of O'Connor's don't care sort of sayings, but I'll give you a better sentiment," and he quoted to him the concluding lines of Longfellow's ladder of S. Augustine—

"Standing on what too long we bore,
With shoulders bent, and downcast eyes,
We may discern—unseen before—
A path to higher destinies.

"Nor deem the irrevocable past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain."

"There, that is what I should call the only right way not to cry over spilt milk."

CHAPTER XIV.

A FEW weeks afterwards Reginald and Benson found themselves together, and driving up to the Academy once again—this time to the second division; and there was a grin of intense satisfaction on their countenances; something had evidently happened to cause them a more than ordinary amount of pleasure.

“I wouldn’t have missed the chance for a ten-pound note,” said A’Bear.

“No, more would I,” responded Benson, with a grin.

“How angry the brute looked. I don’t think he’ll try that little game on again in a hurry.”

"No," answered Reginald, "it is almost too much of a good thing for the fellow to have treated us, a couple of months ago, like brute beasts that have no understanding, or feeling either for the matter of that, and then to try and come the hail-fellow-well-met dodge over us, as though nothing whatever had ever happened. I am quite ready to let bygones be bygones ; but really it was too much of it all of a sudden."

"I don't think he'll try the little game on again in a hurry," answered Benson, with a chuckle. "He will understand what the cold shoulder means for the rest of his life, and will know what we think of him, at any rate—not that it will do him any good, he's much too case-hardened for that. I'll be bound old Nick chuckled a few as he listened to the curses he was letting off inwardly, like the stars coming out of a roman-candle, at intervals. I fancied there was a strong smell of sulphur at the time, although 'tis true it may have only come from the engine. Bah!" he

continued, with a motion of intense disgust, "I'm sick of the fellow, let us talk of something more agreeable; and be thankful that we shan't be obliged to live with him for another six months. Another six months would have given us the typhus fever, I verily believe."

From this conversation it will be gathered that Rufford had met the victims of his previous brutality at the London Bridge station; where, on his coming up and addressing them, and offering his hand, they had cut him dead, and continued talking as though unaware of his presence. He had left the Academy for the Arsenal, so that they could, without any fear of his vengeance, indulge their boyish and unchristian, though very human feelings, of revenge to their heart's content.

When they arrived at the second division, Reginald A'Bear found, as he said to O'Connor next day, that for once he was in luck, for the two other cadets in his room were only

one term above him, and so could not fag him, while de Mervaille, the head of the room, had already given him strict orders that he was on no account to fag for any one else. O'Connor, who was in the same division, professed himself equally well pleased with his new quarters, as the head of his room was an old school-fellow who had only come up to the Academy the summer before him ; so the two boys looked forward to a pleasant term, and all the more pleasant by comparison with the previous one.

Now, de Mervaille was one of the most popular of cadets, and a regular genius in his way ; one of those who, both in mind and body, come to comparative maturity in their teens ; the best linguist and draughtsman in the Academy ; an excellent player at racquets and billiards—which last amusement had to be indulged in on the sly ; an apparently born taxidermist, if one might judge from the cases of stuffed birds which adorned his room ; a first-rate performer on the violin, and had

the entire management of the weekly concerts given by certain members of the Artillery band in the library, which he conducted to the entire satisfaction of every one ; and, though he was far from being idle, yet everything that he took in hand seemed to come almost intuitively, and without any very great effort. He was a perfect gentleman, too, according to the generally received notions on the subject, and his æsthetic nature made him shrink from anything like bullying, and A'Bear never did the smallest thing for him without being thanked, which was a new experience to him. But, at the same time, another six months of Rufford's bullying would, perhaps, have done him less harm than six months spent in de Mervaille's company ; more especially as he took a great fancy to Reginald, who was the only one in the room who had any artistic taste, and could enter into his favourite pursuits ; for vice, which in Rufford looked as black as midnight, seemed a somewhat different colour when

looked at through de Mervaille's tinted spectacles. While he never omitted to pray night and morning, his religion appeared to sit somewhat lightly upon him, as it did not act in any way as a deterrent from sin. Whatever may have been the manner of his life during the day, no evening passed but what he knelt for a few moments before retiring to rest, and again on the following morning; but when he put on his coat with as little effort, he put off his religion until the evening came again.

Reginald could not at all understand him, for de Mervaille was not exactly a hypocrite; his character was an enigma, which, however, was in some degrees solved a few evenings afterwards.

"I say, de Mervaille," began one of the other cadets in the room, on a certain Saturday evening after they had been discussing the events of the afternoon, "I can't understand how you can act as you do, and yet go on saying your prayers all the same."

"Can't you?" he answered, calmly continuing the tuning of his violin, in which he was engaged at the time; "I can easily explain the whole matter to you. You see, I wish to do what's right, so I continue to pray. I did think of giving it up at one time, but came to the conclusion that, as although I did not wish, yet I did what was wrong, I was not really to blame in the matter. Indeed, I sometimes think at such times that I am not really myself, but some one else."

"What do you mean?" he rejoined, while Reginald felt somewhat dumbfounded at such extraordinary notions.

"Why, I don't know that I can explain myself any clearer; when I do what is wrong, it is quite contrary to my better feelings—as I feel, for instance, at the present moment—and therefore think that I am right in saying that it is not altogether I myself that do the wrong, and so continue to pray. Besides which, I promised my mother, and I suppose that she knows more about such matters than I do."

"But don't you think that you ought to make some effort of your own?" his enquirer asked.

"Well, so I do ; I wish and pray."

"Ah, but that is not enough. I know it's no use for me to argue with you, for you can beat me into fits at that, still I know that you are wrong ; and if I remember rightly, there is some text in the Bible about working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. I am sure that our fate must lie in our own hands in some degree, at least."

"Perhaps so," he replied, "you asked me for my reasons, and I have given them to you."

"I am rather inclined to believe in the *αναγκη* which the priest in Victor Hugo's 'Nôtre Dame' saw written on its walls. When I was a little boy at school, I remember learning some lines of Shakespeare—

'Cowards die many times before their death,
The valiant never taste of death but once ;
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Must come when it will come.'

That last line always impressed me very much ; I apply it not only to death, but to all the affairs of life, and have adopted, as my motto, '*Ce qu'il faut venir viendra.*'

"You ought to turn Mussulman at once," interposed A'Bear, in a surprised tone of voice, "and then in all the disagreeable turns of the wheel of fortune, you could just lift your eyes to the ceiling, take your pipe out of your mouth for a moment, and exclaim, 'God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet !' and then puff away again as if nothing had happened."

"A very charming way, no doubt, of getting over the difficulties of life ; but really, I think that yours is a most wretched system ; it reduces us to mere pieces of animated mechanism, which, if you turn one handle or the other, as the case may be, go forward, or backward, stop, or turn this or that way, with no wills of our own whatever. I must say that I don't believe in fatalism in any shape or form."

Answered, but not convinced, de Mervaille

did not deign to reply, and by way of finishing the argument, and banishing any disagreeable thoughts, he took up the violin, and played with most excellent taste and skill one of Mozart's most difficult sonatas.

Thus it is that men, young men especially, who find it much easier to give way to their inclinations than to attempt to restrain them, play with their consciences, reason themselves into a tacit compact with the evil one, and manage, in some degree, even to throw the blame of their sins on God. And alas! the seeds of a specious sophistry and a false casuistry (although he knew that it was false) were sown in the not altogether unwilling heart of Reginald A'Bear, long to rankle there.

And so the term wore away, without any particular incident to mark its course, and Reginald was beginning to think that there was no such place in the world as the Woolhurst Academy, and to look forward to the pleasures of old cadetship, which would

be his to enjoy in a few month's time. Perhaps, what seemed the most remarkable incident to him, was, that he had fired the thirteen-inch mortar, the shell from which had struck the flagstaff on the common at 800 yards—a feat seldom accomplished even by the most practised gunners.

Other events, however, had taken place—one was his introduction to Pluckem and Saveall, the tailors and money-lenders. It fell out on this wise: de Mervaille, one evening, just before setting out for the library, said to Reginald, “I say, A’Bear, I think I heard you and O’Connor arranging to go into the town to-morrow; if so, I wish you would call on old Pluckem, and tell him to send up for this waistcoat” (which was black, embroidered in blue—the especial academic fashion in those days, and the work of his favourite sister), “and say that I will come down about it on Monday. Tell him, too, that he must change this tie,” pointing to one on the table, “as it does not look at all well by candle-light.”

Reginald promised, and three o'clock on the following afternoon found him and O'Connor in the shop of Pluckem and Save-all. Pluckem, who was getting on for sixty years of age, was a little dapper man, but with a decided tendency to corpulency about the kitchen department; all smiles, or rather smirks, who, when talking to his customers, was for ever washing his hands with invisible soap and imperceptible water; but with a keen eye to his own particular business, which was a mixture of the tailor, hosier, jeweller, perfumer, money-lender, and general fitter-out and taker-in of cadets and young officers. Perfectly ignorant of everything except the requirements of his own particular business which had gradually grown upon him, and required sharpness rather than any higher quality, and by which, report said, and report said truly, he was making a large fortune. In his own line, it would have been difficult to have found his equal. With new customers, or with those

who paid him regularly, or who he knew could pay him eventually, he was amiability itself; but, woe betide any unfortunate young man whom he had in his power—a grisly bear with an unfortunate trapper in his arms could not have shown less mercy. The commencement of many a ruined life, of hopes buried in an early tomb, and of gray hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave, dated from the first visit to his shop. His library was of a peculiar character, and consisted of the Army and Navy Lists, Burke's Peerage, The Court Guide, The Landed Gentry, The Clergy List, and the Post Office Directory; by means of which he was pretty well informed of the means and station of each applicant for clothes or money.

When the two boys entered his shop, he came out of the inner den beyond, washing his hands, as usual, and going to the other side of the counter, stood quietly awaiting their orders, and taking their measure in the meantime, mentally and tailorly. Reginald

gave de Mervaille's message, and was preparing to leave again, when old Pluckem, having promised to send up for the waistcoat that same evening, said—

“Cannot I show you anything, gentlemen?” uncovering at the same time, a case of very handsome pins and studs, and opening a box of ties.

“What a jolly pin!” said O'Connor, taking up a horse's head.

“Yes, gentlemen; only came this morning from Paris; never been uncovered before, the very latest thing, I assure you; all solid, embossed gold. Just feel the weight, gentlemen? only three pound ten shillings, and cheap at the money.” All this being delivered with the same series of jerks, while the hands continued their never-ceasing motion, as though something or other required a great deal of washing away.

O'Connor felt the weight, but the price had frightened him, and he put it down again.

Now, it was no part of the usual method pursued by the senior partner of the firm of Pluckem and Saveall to frighten his customers on their first acquaintance; so he did not attempt to press the jewellery upon them, but produced some braces, and as the demon of purchase had entered their minds, they each took a pair; Reginald paying for his, and O'Connor saying that he would bring the money the next time that he came into the town.

When this little transaction was over, and they were preparing to leave, old Pluckem asked them if they would not have a glass of sherry after their walk. It was contrary to all A'Bear's notions of things to accept such an offer, and he was about politely to refuse, and pass out into the street, when O'Connor whispered in his ear—

“Let us go and see the old fellow's den;” and so curiosity got the better of prudence.

It was a little room about twelve feet

square, and being only lighted from the shop, was dark enough ; there was a small table in the centre, surrounded by a horsehair sofa, and a few chairs, a bureau, with the library aforesaid on one side of the fire, and a cupboard on the other, from whence he took a bottle of sherry and a plate of biscuits.

They drank their sherry, and after chatting for a few moments, left Pluckem and Saveall, who suddenly and mysteriously appeared from the workshops in the back regions, bowing them out politely.

When they were in the street, O'Connor said—

“I'm not sorry to be in the street again ; I would not be in his clutches for a hundred pounds.”

“No, more would I ; it seemed to me for all the world like a spider's den. The shop outside, into which the flies are enticed and entangled in the web, and then the den behind into which they are afterwards dragged, and all their blood sucked out of them ; and he

quoted some lines from a poem which he had learnt some years before :—

“ ‘Walk in, walk in, mother,’ said he,
‘And shut the door behind ;’
She thought for such a gentleman
That he was wondrous kind,
But ere the midnight clock had tolled,
Like a tiger in the wood
He had eaten the flesh from off her bones,
And drank of her heart’s blood.”

At this, O’Connor burst out laughing.

“You may laugh, if you like,” Reginald answered, “but I mean to say that the description of ‘Web Spinner,’ is an exact description of the old reprobate, and so you’d find it if you ever got into his power :—

‘Web Spinner was a miser old,
Who came of low degree ;
His body was large, his legs were thin,
And he kept low company.

‘And his visage had an evil look
Of black felonious grin ;
To all the country he was known,
But none spoke well of him.’”

“Well, I do believe, after all, that you are about right,” O’Connor replied ; “there are a lot of fellows, I know, in his debt pretty deeply.”

That same evening, Reginald told de Mervaille his opinion of old Pluckem.

"Yes; and you've hit his character to a T," he answered. "I owe him a great deal too much, and am always determining to pay him off, and have nothing more to do with him; but, somehow or other, I spend the ready-money, and so the bill runs on from term to term, getting larger with additional debts and interest. I know that the wisest course would be to make a clean breast of it to the governor, but I don't want him to lose confidence in me, and he cuts up rather rough, too, when roused a bit."

"But you'll have to do it eventually," interrupted Reginald, "so I should say the sooner the better."

"But one puts off the evil day, thinking something may turn up, and the old rascal never asks for his bill, not he—he knows it is safe enough; he hasn't studied the Landed Gentry to no purpose. But don't you have anything to do with him. If you owe him

five pounds only, such is the wily craft of the old sinner, that he'll make it five and twenty before the year is over, and in the end will pluck you as clean as a poulterer does a dead chicken. However, its no use to anticipate the evil day. '*Ce qu'il faut venir viendra.*'"

"I'm precious thankful that I don't owe the old fellow anything," remarked A'Bear.

"And well you may be; take my advice, and never get into his power. He's worse than any rattlesnake, for he don't let you hear the rattle, in a general way. But what do you think? the old sinner has a grand villa near Clapham, where he comes out in quite a different character. I fancy that he is some sort of a religious swell down there; any way, when staying with a cousin of mine, I have seen him walking on Sunday in the bosom of his family — black coat, white choker, and all complete. To see the old hypocrite playing the devout nearly made me ill."

Reginald inwardly thought that he might

have taken the lesson to himself, and what he could see so plainly to be false and unreal in another he might have perceived as clearly in his own conduct, but said nothing, as de Mervaille continued—

“Curiously enough, the old fellow’s daughters go to the same school in London as my youngest sister, so I got her to arrange, at the end of last term, as we live further down on the same line of railway, to leave London by the same train. Of course, quite accidentally, I joined them at the station, and was very sorry when they got out of the carriage at Clapham. You would no more expect to find ribston pippins on a crabtree, than that they could be the daughters of old Pluckem.”

“I suppose they were grafted on, somehow,” suggested Reginald, laughing.

“Yes, my sister says that their mother was the daughter of an officer in the army, who married to save her widowed mother from poverty. The fair Agnes and I got as far

as sending kind regards to one another through my sister. Indeed, I have a very strong suspicion that she embroidered one side of this very waistcoat."

"Fancy, being old Pluckem's son-in-law!" put in Reginald, drollingly.

"No fear of that," rejoined de Mervaille, slightly colouring; "Why the whole family of de Mervaille would be up in arms; the blue blood of I don't know how many generations would fairly boil again, and I should be obliged to take the name of Pluckem in self-defence."

"*Ce qu'il faut venir viendra*," added the youngster, with mock solemnity.

"None of your impudence," he replied, rising to go to the library, "but, joking apart, I should seriously advise you to have nothing whatever to do with him."

The practical issue of the conversation was, that Reginald never rested until he had made O'Connor allow him to go and pay for the braces; although, before the end of the

next term they were both in the old man's debt—O'Connor somewhat deeply.

The ease and immunity from bullying which the chief victim of Jenkins' brutality had enjoyed during the greater part of his third term was, however, suddenly broken, and he had to experience for about six weeks the disagreeable truth of the Southern proverb, "Though the bandmaster may be changed the tunes are the same." The head corporal of the fourth division having been obliged to go home in consequence of a severe illness, de Mervaille was promoted to the post, and the corporal who took his place being a lad of no force of character, A'Bear soon found himself in the unenviable position of general slave to the whole first division. Todd, at the beginning of the term had tried the old game on; but had desisted from fear of de Mervaille's tongue, which had the power of saying the most sarcastic things in the quietest and most cutting way possible.

But now Reginald had once again to get

up every morning and go through the same performances as during the second week of his life as a cadet; Todd positively revelling in his last opportunity for bullying, more especially upon a former victim. 'Tis true that he seldom resorted to physical violence. He was expecting to go down to the Arsenal at the end of the term, and prudence restrained him, but in every other way he gave full play to his brutality, and words will often cut deeper than blows, and leave more lasting scars. It would have been perfectly unendurable, except that it only took place in the morning, and for the knowledge that it would all be over in a few weeks. But after a morning spent with "the Toad" as slave driver, the mind was not in the best condition for a stiff mathematical paper, or for the rendering of a portion of one of Macaulay's essays into grammatical and idiomatic French; and, consequently, he did not take so good a position in the examination as he would otherwise have done. Yet, as

there were only two others in his batch besides Forester who were promoted into the first class, and the name of A'Bear appeared at no very great distance from the top of the second, he was very well satisfied ; his being in the same room with de Mervaille, who would often persist in carrying on the conversation in French or German, had been so far of service to him, that his colloquial knowledge of those languages had been considerably increased.

This information, however, had to be forwarded to Burrscombe, for one morning, after the examination was over, and their yet remained some ten days to the end of the term, Todd having been more than usually brutal, Reginald determined to see if he could not sham being ill and so be sent down to the hospital, and escape any further bullying for the term of his natural life. A year before he could not have conceived such a piece of dissimulation, but twelve months of Jenkins' bullying, and de Mervaille's casuistry had

somewhat blunted his moral sense, and blinded his conscience; and he now laid his plans without hesitation, telling no one, not even O'Connor, of his intentions.

He commenced by going to the pastry-cook's and eating an ice, and immediately on the top of it a basin of mock turtle soup and some oyster patties. An excellent digestion being proof even against this combination of antagonistic elements, he commenced at tea time to complain of sickness, and a bad headache; and such was the powers of fancy, that by ten o'clock he had imagined them into a semblance of the reality; and, as he slept very little during the night from over-excitement, when Todd came next morning to know why he had not come over as usual, he had worked himself into a fever, with the usual symptoms of a flushed cheek and quickened pulse; which he so increased by knocking his arms violently against the sides of the Bath-chair which conveyed him to the hospital, that when the doctor felt his pulse he pronounced him to be

in a fever, and ordered medicine and fever diet accordingly. But when, before twenty-four hours had passed away, a most sudden and complete change for the better had taken place, the doctor, having a pretty good notion of cadet life in general, guessed the cause of his illness ; but being a kind hearted man, advised the authorities to send him home, saying, "that home scenes and kind faces would soon put him to rights." And so it was that one morning when the rest of the cadets were in the classroom, Reginald went over to his room, quickly packed up his things, and found himself at his uncle's house at Bath almost a week before the end of the term : yet, now that his end had been obtained, upon second thoughts not altogether satisfied with the way his freedom had been procured.

CHAPTER XV.

It was with very different feelings that, about six weeks afterwards, Reginald said "good-bye" to his friends at Sandstone; and it was under very different auspices to what they had been a year before, when his great desire had been to avoid Todd and his companions, that he shook hands with O'Connor at the London Bridge station. It was just such another cold-giving, spirit-damping, sleety afternoon. But instead of, as then, freezing outside in the draughty station, they were now merry and comfortable in the waiting-room round the fire; the heat of which, with boyish selfishness, they most effectually hindered from reaching the other occupants of the room;

besides scandalizing some of them by their excessive hilarity.

On the following day, when they were sitting in the classroom, the corporal on duty came round, and told them that they were old cadets, and it was curious to observe the various effects which his communication had on differently constituted minds. Some blushed, some smiled, some received the intelligence with a pleasant nod; others with an apparently stolid unconcern went on with their work as though nothing had happened, affecting an indifference which they by no means felt; while others, by degrees, before the class was over, furtively adopted some of the outward signs of old-cadetship, such as the hanging of the watch chain, and the showing of a corner of the pocket-handkerchief outside the coat, and as they left the classrooms to a man (for they felt that they had now, at any rate reached the manhood of cadetship) they had put the strap above their forage caps.

The commencement of old-cadetship was

the most critical period in the life of a cadet, and too many took the broad road, forgetting that "the way of transgressors is hard." To such as Forester or Sloane, the sense of freedom and authority was an unmixed good; to brutal natures, as Todd's or Rufford's, who were for ever abusing their power, it was an unmixed evil; while, with regard to such as A'Bear and O'Connor, who were no worse, and perhaps a little better than most of those around them, it seemed almost a toss up whether they would derive good or evil from it; for old-cadetship brought with it many fresh temptations. For instance, old cadets smoked on the sly, so not to be behind the fashion (for nowadays, the pipe seems to be looked upon by Young England in much the same light as the *toga virilis* was by ancient Rome), a visit was paid to the tobacconist, and a store of silver-mounted meerschaum pipes, cigar cases, and cigars, laid in by way of commencing operations. No very great harm in this, except that it was contrary to

rules and a waste of money, and had a decided tendency in such young lads to weaken the stomach, shorten the stature, and deaden the intellect. For it was a proof of determination at any rate to undergo without flinching, except as far as it was involuntary, spasmodic and most disagreeable sensations in the esophagus and epigastric regions. But then it brought other evils in its train. Those who broke rules in one direction, were, of course, so much the more ready to break them in others also. Money which was spent in this way was not forthcoming for other matters; and when some smart waistcoats and ties, studs and pins were thought necessary for a proper appearance in the library, it was so very convenient to get them from Pluckem and Saveall without paying for them. One extravagance too frequently leads to others; and when O'Connor's funds failed him, an I.O.U. was such a very simple way of obtaining money, and Pluckem advanced the money so readily, that somehow

or other before the end of the term, he was indebted to the old man to the tune of not much less than fifteen pounds; and many another was in like case. Reginald, though owing him for some clothes and jewelry, had never been under the necessity for borrowing money, simply because he was better supplied with it by his indulgent uncle and grandmother.

There is another evil also connected with smoking, that it too often begets a habit of drinking, and after an unaccustomed pipe on a hot summer's afternoon, something to cool the parched-up palate was felt to be indispensable, and an adjournment to the nearest public-house, where a glass of beer could be obtained with safety, was the next step. And glasses of beer sometimes lead to bowls of punch, and temptations of other kinds follow in their course and grow out of such beginnings. However, Reginald A'Bear was only at present walking on the threshold of those evil courses, not ignorant, if wilfully oblivious, to

the danger ; but the broad road on the other side of the wide gate each day seemed more pleasant and alluring, and there were not wanting many among his associates to tempt him to enter it.

It must not be supposed that conscience all the while was silent—no ; she spoke often so strongly that in his secret heart he would not have been sorry if he could have adopted de Mervaille's method of silencing it, but the whole tenor and training of his early life was against it. Still the sap and mine were at work ; and slowly, but surely and progressively, the devil was drawing the lines of death around his heart, and was only waiting an opportunity for completing his cruel work, when, with a last and vigorous assault he would try to take possession of the citadel ; while his guardian angel must have often trembled as the future of his soul seemed to hang in the balance.

Such was his condition towards the end of the fourth term. Cricket, to which he had

taken with great energy, served in some measure to keep up the manly tone of his mind, and happily prevented him from being so much in O'Connor's company, who was deteriorating very rapidly. Indeed, before the end of the term, a certain amount of coolness had sprung up between the two friends, for O'Connor had taken up with a set with whom Reginald could have no sympathy whatever.

Forester, on the other hand, seemed likely to take Sloane's place in the Academy, and was daily gaining in force of character, both mentally and morally, and Edric Maitland's words would sometimes sadly occur to his friend's mind: "I don't really believe that he is a bit more afraid of falling into temptation than you are, but he knows the danger," for Reginald was ceasing to have confidence in himself, as he could not but feel how easily he was led into temptation, and how little power he had to resist it.

This knowledge, however, for the time, in-

stead of showing him the necessity of seeking help from above, only seemed to make him less persevering, and less able to resist temptation when it came; so that when the vacation arrived he was not sorry to accept an invitation from his uncle to spend the summer in Bath, and in a tour through Wales; for though he would not have acknowledged it, yet in his secret heart he felt that he could not now have experienced the same pleasure as formerly in listening to Mr. Maitland's sermons, in Lorna's company, and in serious conversations with her brother. When they knew of his intentions, in a very kind and apologetic letter to Lorna, the little lady's secret tears, her brother's surmisings, and her father's suspicions of the real truth may be imagined.

The vacation passed pleasantly enough, but an indulgent uncle and admiring cousins were not the most likely persons to assist him in the present crisis of his life, for they made

him just a little conceited, and prevented him from forming a just estimation of himself.

On his return to the Academy Reginald found that he was, curiously enough, head of the same room in which he had formerly endured the bullying of Rufford. The three young cadets who shared the apartment were soon put at their ease with regard to the treatment which they might expect at his hands ; for after narrating some of the scenes in which he had acted as an unwilling victim, he assured them that they need be under no sort of fear lest the room should ever see a repetition of them whilst he was in it. A natural kindness of heart which prompted him to be considerate to those who were so completely in his power, and an awakened sense of responsibility which urged him, more especially after a conversation with Forester, to try and set them a good example, might have been eventually the turning point in his career ; when

a circumstance happened, as unexpected as it was disastrous, which entirely altered the whole manner of his life.

He was returning from a walk one Sunday afternoon in the beginning of September with another head of a room in the same division ; and when half way down Shooter's Hill had met O'Connor and two friends, who proposed, as the day was very hot, that they should go into a public-house which was close at hand, have something to drink, and then return together.

Now Reginald had never yet been into a public-house on the Sunday, and indeed had not visited one during the term ; but, instead of at once bravely saying that he had determined never to enter one again, answered that " he did not want anything, and wished to get back to the Academy to write a letter before service time," which was strictly true, but cowardly.

" Ah ! I see what it is," O'Connor interrupted him, somewhat testily ; " I have seen

it coming to this for some time, you want to cut me altogether."

"No, Charlie, you wrong me there," he rejoined, "I don't wish to cut you at all, but we went out with the intention of only taking a short walk, that I might get back in time to write a letter."

"I think you had better give up the 'Charlie' for the future," O'Connor answered, while one of his companions chimed in with a sneer, "They are afraid of a glass, come along, and let the saints go and write their letters."

Not the least successful of the devil's weapons, especially when wielded in his service by a companion, is ridicule, and many a young man who would walk fearlessly to the very cannon's mouth is yet unable to meet the taunt of a comrade without flinching—alas, poor human nature!—and, so it was, that contrary to his own wishes, and despising himself for his weakness, Reginald A'Bear found himself a few minutes afterwards one of a party of five, at much about the same hour as Mr. Maitland

was preaching in the old church at Sandstone, seated in the back parlour of a public-house, with a bowl of punch on the table before them. When they had come to the bottom, somebody proposed, in order, as he said, "to put everything straight," that they should finish up with some "brandy and soda." This was agreed to, and as soon as it was finished, and the reckoning paid, they made the best of their way back to the Academy, and arrived just in time for church parade.

When Reginald had met O'Connor he was overheated with his walk; and as a heated body and an empty stomach are not the most favourable conditions for unaccustomed potations, the hurry back afterwards caused the bad spirit to mount to the brain, so that he found considerable difficulty even in standing on parade. He managed to reach the dining hall without observation, but before the commencement of the sermon had become so perfectly helpless that he would have fallen backwards had he not been supported by

those who sat behind. A *denouement*, however, could not be prevented, and when, at the close of the service, with great difficulty he had been aroused, it was only to fall down, while the violent fit of sickness which followed told its own tale too plainly.

That night, while the moon was shining brightly, and the stars looked down from heaven, beaming with equal brilliancy upon vice and purity, misery and splendour, making no distinction between the squalid abodes of poverty and discontent and the lordly halls of wealth and selfishness; while the world for a season had laid aside its bustle and activity, its toil and its money-getting; while the ploughman after the rest of the Sabbath was about to seek his bed with the certainty of slumber, the happy sleep of the unintellectual; and the votaries of pleasure were about to lie down upon their luxurious couches, glad that the day was over and longing for the evening of the morrow, with its garish blaze of light as insincere as the

folly which it shone upon—Reginald A'Bear, the victim of a comrade's snare, lay in the black hole in a state of semi-stupor, hardly realizing the extent and possible consequences of his degradation; a hard board for his bed, the stony walls for his pillow—alone, all alone—yet not alone—there was a lost sheep to be saved; and could his eyes have been opened, he would have seen that there was One near him, though he might have appeared for the time to have passed by; and that there was a ladder at hand, and upon it ascending and descending angels. All these things were, however, for a season hidden from his sight.

Let it not be supposed, however, that there were none who thought of him that night. Forester, who occupied the same room in the 5th division as Sloane in their first term, when he had looked at the bed which Reginald had slept in as an innocent and guileless boy, could not contain himself, but hastily entering his apartment fairly broken down, and wept; and then, kneeling down, prayed long

and earnestly for his friend, and rose strengthened in his resolutions to try and do something to save him if possible from expulsion.

And what were O'Connor's feelings during that, to him, long and sleepless night? He was far from being a bad hearted boy, and the knowledge that he had been the tempter filled him with the most poignant sorrow and despair. If the sufferings of the doomed hereafter will consist principally of the tormenting pangs of the remorse of conscience, Charles O'Connor tasted of them during that long and dreadful night. The whole evening he sat with his head buried in his hands, the picture of helpless grief, refusing all comfort from the other cadets in his room; saying that he had ruined A'Bear, who would be dismissed from the Academy, and that he should never be happy again as long as he lived.

When the lights were put out and he went to bed, it was long before sleep visited him,

and then it was only to dream horribly. It seemed to him that he was walking with Reginald on the Common, and that a bullet came and pierced his forehead, and that notwithstanding his own bitter grief and assertions of innocence, he was accused of the murder, and was led away to prison between files of soldiers. And then came the trial; and in his dream he seemed to hear all the witnesses without exception declare their belief that he was the murderer; and then all the faces in the court seemed to be looking at him, and all their hands to be pointing at him; and just as the judge was about to put on the black cap to pronounce sentence of death, he awoke with a start in the direst terror, and could hardly believe for the moment that it was only a dream, and so was afraid to go to sleep again. He got up, therefore, and half dressing, sat down on the corner of the bed, and as the moon soon afterwards stole out from behind a dark cloud, and shone brightly into the room, he went to the window and

gazed upon it. And all without was so peaceful and calm and heavenly, that after a time his heart seemed to grow more quiet, and his fevered blood to flow less rapidly, so that he was able at last to set himself to think, which he had not been able to do before.

He thought of his life during the last few months, and shuddered; and when he came to the events of the previous day, the bitterest remorse seized him again, and hardly knowing what he was about, he did what he had not done for months before—he fell on his knees before the throne of God. It was long before he prayed, but he continued thinking in that position, and who can doubt but that those thoughts were recognized as prayers before Jehovah's mercy seat; for it was while he was there that the idea suddenly came to him that he would go on the morrow and confess to the captain that he had been the tempter and the cause of Reginald's fall; and lest his courage should evaporate, he determined to go to Forester the very first thing

in the morning, and ask him to accompany him directly after breakfast to the captain's quarters. This determination seemed to give immediate ease to his mind, and he was able to pray that strength might be given him to carry out his lately formed resolution, and to vow that he would try from that day forward to lead a better life. When he got into bed again, he was soon sound asleep; and indeed slept so soundly that his companions had some difficulty in rousing him on the following morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

POOR Reginald's thoughts when he awoke and threw off the blanket with which he had been covered, after a night, which notwithstanding the hardness of the pillow, had been passed, happily for him, in the heaviest of slumbers, were, as may be supposed, none of the happiest or most cheerful. When he had sat up and rubbed his eyes, for a moment he could not imagine where he was, but in the next it all flashed before him. He was in the black hole, having been brought there in a state of intoxication. Was it after all merely an ugly dream? Alas, no; the place in which he was told him that it was a stern reality. God-forsaken, as he seemed to be, "I can

never try again," he thought, and wished that he might die. The springs of his young life were for the time parched up, and the fount of his tears was dry, as he sat there the picture of despair, his heart growing each moment harder and harder, hardened against every better feeling, hardened even against God. The food brought him was left untasted, and he even refused, sullenly, to wash himself when invited so to do, but sat on and on, until he felt as though he were becoming petrified, a very part of the stone on which he sat. A little before noon the chaplain came to see him, and spoke kindly on the nature of the sin of which he had been guilty, urging him to sorrow and repentance; but, taking for granted that this was not the first offence of the sort, said—"That he hoped, whatever might be the present consequences of his conduct, he might be led to see the awful effects of drunkenness even in this world . . ." and was about to speak of its still more awful consequences in the next, when Reginald, who

had sat on quietly without answering a word, jumped up as if shot, and exclaimed, "A drunkard, am I? Just for one offence? Yes, I suppose I am. But it's of no use for you to talk to me, the curse of God has been upon me ever since I was born. My mother died when I was quite young; my property was taken from me; my father was drowned—oh, why was I not drowned too?—it's of no use for me to try. You know not what I have had to endure since I have been here, and to end in this, when numbers much worse than I am escape."

The chaplain, astonished at his sudden vehemence, tried to reason with him, but in vain; he only said, not indeed so vehemently, but with despair sounding in every syllable, "No, it's not as if it was my own fault, it's of no use for me to try any more; just, too, when I was beginning to try harder than ever, and to see my way clearer."

As soon as the chaplain had, in much sorrow, taken his leave, Reginald sat down again, and

said bitterly to himself more than once, "A drunkard! Yes, I suppose I am a drunkard." And then he thought over what Mr. and Mrs. Maitland, Edric and Lorna would think of it. That Lorna would never be allowed to speak to him again was, of course, certain; and his dear old grandmother, would she ever get over it? and the faithful Nanny, what would she think of it? Such thoughts as these, over and over again, looked at from every point of view, in every shape and form, were his mental food that day.

His vehemence, however, had one good effect; it had effectually aroused him, and he did not refuse the food when brought to him, nor to wash himself in what was commonly called the white hole, into which, after another night spent in the black hole, he was removed, while his fate was being decided.

In the meantime, however, things were looking brighter as the whole truth was known to the authorities.

Directly he was dressed, O'Connor went over to see Forester, and made a clean breast of the whole matter. Forester at once readily promised to accompany him after breakfast to the captain's quarters, and the sympathy he so warmly expressed very much strengthened O'Connor in his resolution.

Immediately after breakfast they went on their errand, and very unhappy did they both feel as they passed the building in which Reginald was confined. When they arrived at their destination they found that the captain was engaged; but when he learnt they had come to speak about A'Bear, sent word out that he would see them some time in the morning during class hours.

They then proceeded to the library, and found a number of cadets, among them O'Connor's companions of the previous Sunday, discussing A'Bear's probable fate.

"I say, Forester, don't you think that A'Bear will be expelled, especially as he is

head of a room ?” said Benson, who was one of the orators on the occasion, as they entered the room.

“No, I don’t,” answered Forester, laconically.

“But what are your reasons ?”

“Well, I don’t think he will, that must be sufficient for you, and, to say the truth, I think it would be much kinder, as an old friend, if you would try and think so too.”

“You need not cut up so rough about it,” Benson replied. “You may be quite sure that I wish to see him expelled as little as you do. But you must have some reason. I confess that I don’t see what will be the extenuating circumstances. Kirkham says that he must have been drinking before he met him, as they did not have enough then to make him so fearfully screwed.”

“That’s a lie, Kirkham, and what is more you know that it is,” fired up O’Connor; “he was perfectly sober when we met him, and if

it had not been for our jeering at him, he never would have tasted a drop."

"Well, it's just a matter of opinion; I think he was."

"Matter of opinion, be ——," exclaimed O'Connor, forgetting himself for a moment in his wrath and scorn, while the bitter thought passed through his mind that this was the friend whom he had exchanged for A'Bear. "Then all I can say is that you are just the biggest liar that ever broke a bit of bread. Do you mean to say that you did not say that he was afraid of a glass, and that your taunt of cowardice made him come in? But I won't waste any more breath upon you. You are just a mean-spirited hound, that's what you are."

"You certainly are not very complimentary, and bad language isn't argument," answered Kirkham, sneeringly.

"Perhaps not, but just put what I have said into your pipe and smoke it, and I hope that it may do you good;" then forgetting

for the moment his intention of not mentioning the matter to any one but Forester, said —“ However, I’ll tell you what I intend to do. Before this day is over, whatever may be the consequences, I intend to tell the whole truth, that it was entirely our fault that it ever happened.”

“ I hope, then, that you won’t mention my name, you will do no good, and only get us into the scrape too. I don’t see the use of such Quixotic nonsense,” said Kirkham contemptuously, while by the pallor which overspread his face was clearly shown how much he feared the consequences of exposure.

The hisses which followed these sentiments, and the “ well done, O’Connor,” which greeted his answer, “ Don’t think I suppose for a moment that you could, but you need not have any fear for your precious carcase, I shall take all the blame upon myself,” showed what the cadets thought of the conduct of their two comrades.

During class hours, the captain, according

to his promise, having requested the presence of the two lieutenants, sent for the two lads. Up to this time, A'Bear had borne a spotless character, and they were lamenting the sad occurrence of the previous evening as Forester and O'Connor entered the room. The sight of the three officers, and the sheet of foolscap upon which would be written down his confession somewhat staggered O'Connor; but it was too late now to go back even if he had wished it, and he bravely advanced up to the table, followed by his friend.

"I have sent for you according to your wish," began the chief officer, "and shall be very glad to hear what you have to say on this unfortunate matter of A'Bear's, but must warn you beforehand that your remarks will be written down."

O'Connor, however, when once set going, soon forgot the formidable sheet of foolscap, and poured forth a full history of the whole matter, blackening himself with Hibernian exaggeration more than was necessary in his

desire to whiten his friend's character, and make amends for his previous fault.

"I suppose you are aware that you have put yourself in a very awkward position," recommenced the captain, slightly smiling in spite of himself, as soon as the lad had made an end of his statement. "You have really gone on so fast that I have not been able to write down a word, so must ask you some questions; but remember, as I warned you before, that your answers will all be written down."

When he had finished, one of the lieutenants said—"But were you and A'Bear alone on Sunday afternoon?" and as O'Connor did not answer, he reiterated the question.

"It was all my fault, indeed it was," answered the boy, "and I am willing to bear all the blame; I hope you won't press me, for I cannot answer the question."

Now, Irishmen are all the world over like so many Freemasons, and as the other lieutenant was a native of the Emerald Isle, he could not forbear saying—

"I think we should not press him, as he is willing to bear the whole blame."

"But," answered the other, "how are we to know if it is the truth or not? I do not mean to say that I doubt his word, but still that is all we have to go upon, and it is just possible that he may only have come forward to shield his friend."

"It is indeed the truth," put in O'Connor earnestly, while the pleading look of his countenance, and the very tone of his voice, was proof sufficient of the fact. "Every word is true, indeed it is. If you could only know what a relief it is to me to have confessed, you could not help believing me. If you only knew what I have gone through since last night, you could not doubt me."

"Neither do we really, but you may see for yourself that we have only your independent, unsupported statement to go upon," replied the captain; and, then, turning to Forester, said, "but perhaps you may be able to throw some more light on this unfortunate matter."

"I only know, sir, that O'Connor told me just the same story when he came this morning and asked me to accompany him to your house; and I feel sure it is all the truth. Indeed, sir, no one has been tried harder than A'Bear since he has been here, nor has resisted more manfully, so I am certain that he must have fallen unawares."

After a few more questions, the captain rose, and, as he dismissed them, said to O'Connor—

"Your statement has certainly in some degree altered the complexion of the case, and does honour to your heart. Still, as discipline must be kept up, you will have to take the consequences of this confession, and I am sorry to have to put you under arrest."

When they were fairly outside the room, and had closed the door, O'Connor put his arm through Forester's, and as they walked slowly along the passage, said—

"Thank God that is over."

"Yes," he answered, "but you must remember though, that it is only the beginning."

"But," he replied, as they were about to

separate at the top of the stairs to go to their several classrooms, "you don't think that A'Bear will be expelled?"

"No," rejoined Forester, "but we must not buoy ourselves up too much. I suppose that there will be a private inquiry to-morrow when the governor comes home, and then we shall be able to form a better opinion."

When they entered the classroom, of course inquiring eyes were turned upon them from every direction; and for some time afterwards there was a subdued buzz of conversation, as a report of the proceedings below rapidly passed from desk to desk.

* * * * *

That long and dreary day seemed like a week to poor Reginald. He thought that his feelings must have been like the Egyptians' during the ninth plague, for the darkness could indeed be felt. It was like a heavy weight pressing upon him, which prevented him from moving, almost from breathing pro-

perly, and when he put out his hand there seemed a certain substance in the surrounding air. His watch, which had belonged to his father, and had been found upon him after the shipwreck, had stopped the night before, so he wound it up, not that he could tell the time, but its ticking was companionable, anything so as not to think about himself, for he felt that in that utter darkness it would drive him mad. He listened attentively to every sound, and by the different bugle calls, and hearing the cadets going to and from the dining hall, managed to have a pretty good notion of the time. He tried to count an hour in seconds, but when he got into four figures gave up the attempt; then to see how many times his pulse went in a minute, but after several trials found that it was an impossible thing to count the ticking of a watch and the beating of a pulse at the same time. Afterwards a happy thought struck him, for remembering that there were a sovereign and some shillings in his purse, he drew them

out, and spent some time in trying to pick the sovereign out, but soon grew such an adept at it, the difference in weight being so very perceptible, that it failed to divert him any longer; so, taking a half-crown, he amused himself by throwing it into the further corner, and then searching for it, but, here again, after a time, his ear became so very keen that he could find it with such comparative ease that it ceased to amuse, and he put it into his purse again. He then sat down for a while, and said over to himself all the poetry that he had learnt by heart, and was astonished to find how much he remembered. When under Mr. Maitland's tuition, he had learnt the greater part of the fifth *Æneid* by heart, and tried to recall it to mind, but stopped when he came to those lines—

"O miseræ, quas non manus, 'inquit,' Achaïca bello
Traxerit ad letum, patriæ sub mœnibus! O gens
Infelix! cui te exitio fortuna reservat?
Septima post Trojæ excidium jam vertitur æstas,
Quum freta, quum terras omnes, tot inhospita saxa,
Sideraque emensæ ferimur, dum per mare magnum
Italiam sequimur fugientem, et volvimus undis."

It was far too vivid a representation of his own case, and many times afterwards in the day those words came involuntarily to his lips, "*O gens infelix! cui te exitio fortuna reservat?*" However the longest day has an end; and sleep, notwithstanding the hardness of his couch, visited his eyes at an early hour; and they never opened again until he was called in the morning, when it was with a feeling of intense relief that he stepped once more into the daylight. The servant who brought the breakfast informed him that he would have to appear before the governor that morning; and immediately the meal was finished, with a better appetite than might be supposed, Reginald set himself to consider what would be the best course to pursue under the circumstances.

If boys are very often devoid of right feeling on other points, there is, at any rate, one point of honour strongly developed, viz., "not to sneak." And though Reginald felt that he had been grievously sinned against,

and that unless the whole truth were known, he would most certainly be expelled, he yet determined to brave any consequences rather than inform against his comrades. "A year ago he would have come forward of his own accord," he said to himself, "but now"—and he sighed heavily, as he remembered their late estrangement, and the deterioration in his old friend's character; and felt that he could hardly look for it now; still he determined to tell the whole truth, but to refuse to mention any names. After this resolve, he sat on quietly in the expectation of the summons to appear before the court of inquiry, and felt very nervous and miserable. Naturally sensitive, and notwithstanding the scenes amid which he had lived during the two years past, retaining a strong sense of right and wrong, the effects of his early training and a religious education, he realized to the full the degradation of his position.

Since Sunday morning no prayer had passed his lips, and he had no desire to pray. "Had

he not prayed ? had he not striven ? and yet he had fallen ; no one had ever been tempted more than he had, what was the use of striving any more ?” Such were his thoughts. Mr. Maitland’s sermon on the last Sunday before he left home was forgotten—to persevere in spite of sin—and so his heart became more seared and hardened, and exceeding bitter against every one, against himself, even against God.

No one at that moment would hardly have recognised his countenance for that of Reginald A’Bear. His hands were clasped tightly upon his knees, his usually dancing eyes were fixed and stony, and his flexible mouth and speaking features were hard and rigid, and he looked, what he was not, a thoroughly bad boy. At this moment a robin began to sing on the wall outside, so softly and sweetly that it seemed as though the little bird must have known that there was one near who needed comfort, while the boy held his breath for fear of driving it away. Again

and again it warbled on, and each time its calm and gentle note sunk deeper and deeper into that hardened heart. It was like David's harp to Saul when the evil spirit was upon him, like the rain upon the mountain side to open once again the dried up springs, or a balmy south wind after a winter's frost; and the boy's lips began to quiver, and the tears began to rise, and he felt a choking sensation in his throat; for that note brought many a recollection of home in a flood upon his soul, and made many a chord to vibrate. There was one spot especially which it brought before his mind, the spot too for him to remember of all others at the time—his mother's grave; for many a time as he sat upon it years before, he had listened to a robin which used to sing in the churchyard; indeed it had at one time grown so friendly and tame that it would fly down and pick up the crumbs which he would scatter over the neighbouring graves. When Nanny was afterwards told the story, she said that

"nothing would ever make her believe that it was a bird at all, for nobody had seen it, it was just his own mother who had come down to give him comfort;" and to this, her brother John had nodded an assent more forcible than any amount of words.

What effect the bird's song might have had upon him, whether it might eventually have brought Reginald to his knees cannot be told, for suddenly the song ceased, and immediately afterwards the door was opened; the summons had come for him to attend the court. But the song of that little bird had indeed been like an angel's visit. During the time he remained a prisoner he often heard it again, and always about the same hour in the morning.

END OF VOL. I.

8-2



